KABUKI'S FORGOTTEN WAR 1931–1945

JAMES R. BRANDON

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James R. Brandon

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INTRODUCTION

I did not plan to write this book. It forced its presence on me while I was doing research on the censorship that kabuki endured during the American Occupation that followed Japan's defeat in World War II. As I read descriptions of kabuki that were written in the immediate postwar years, I was struck by the insistence of both Japanese and American writers that the kabuki plays being submitted to American Occupation censors between 1945 and 1949 were wholly classical works, having no connection to Japanese society of the mid-1940s. And yet as everyone knows, throughout the history of kabuki, actors in every generation acted in new plays. Indeed premieres constituted the lifeblood of kabuki from Okuni's first performances in the early 1600s through the Tokugawa period (1603–1868). In January 2000, Samuel L. Leiter and I were in Tokyo selecting play scripts to be translated in the four-volume series *Kabuki Plays On Stage.* Our central theme was that every generation of kabuki artists created new plays that reflected contemporary life in Japan.

I was faced with a nagging question: if the plays performed by kabuki actors were wholly traditional in September 1945 when the occupation of Japan began, when had the fossilization of the kabuki repertory occurred? When had playwrights ceased to write contemporary plays for kabuki theaters, and when did kabuki actors stop performing them? I was shamefaced. I didn't know. Nearly fifty years ago, Professor Kawatake Shigetoshi suggested in his magisterial *Complete History of Japanese Theater* (*Nihon engeki zenshi*, 1959) that new plays stopped being performed in kabuki theaters after 1894–1895 (see Chapter 1). What then of the half century between 1895 and 1945, and especially the fifteen years 1931–1945? I had encountered almost nothing about wartime kabuki in my readings up until this time.

I thought that a direct way to confirm the "classic" nature of kabuki drama in the decades preceding 1945 would be to scan the standard chronological listings of kabuki productions published by the Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation (Nagayama Takeomi, ed., *Kabuki-za hyakunen shi* and *Shōchiku hyakunen shi*) and the National Theater of Japan (Kokuritsu Gekijō Kindai Nenpyō Hensanshitsu, ed., *Kindai kabuki nenpyō*, see Sources). To my amazement I found scores of plays whose titles indicated contemporary subject matter: *Riding the Famous Hot-Air Balloon* (1891), *Festival of the Founding of the Manchurian Na-*

tion (1932), and *Ten Thousand Cheers for the South Seas* (1944), among many others. When I focused on the period of Japan's "Fifteen-Year War" (1931–1945), title after title indicated a war play set in the present time: *Three Heroic Human Bombs* (1932), *Secret Agent of a Nation at War* (1938), *Tank Commander Nishizumi* (1940), *Submarine No. 6* (1941), and *Pearl Harbor* (1942), to name a few titles of plays staged at kabuki theaters. In time, sources yielded some 160 kabuki plays about the war with China, and later America and Britain, or that used historical subject matter to comment on the current war.

This book is the result of eight years of research that followed on my simple question: when did current subject matter leave the kabuki stage? And the completely unexpected answer that emerged was: not until the war was over. In the following chapters, I quote extensively from Japanese sources of the time — books, newspaper stories, magazine articles, war reports, speeches, performance reviews, play scripts, and diaries — to convey the way Japanese perceived kabuki during the war's cataclysmic course (rather than in later, perhaps rosy-tinged, memory). We see that the institution of kabuki actively participated in Japan's wartime adventures between 1931 and 1945. Indeed, kabuki war plays were the subject of illustrated postcards printed, sold, and mailed everywhere in Japan during the war years (for example, Figs. 11.5–11.8).

I devote considerable space to setting the actions of kabuki managers, playwrights, producers, and actors within the broad parabola of political and military events during the war: kabuki's star rose with the expansion of the new Japanese Empire into China and the Pacific (1931–1942), and kabuki was nearly destroyed when Japan's empire was bloodily dismembered in the final war years (1943–1945). The records show that contemporary events were dramatized on the kabuki stage until early 1945. The kabuki repertory became "classic" only after the war was lost and partly in response to the arrival of the American occupiers (and Occupation theater censors).

The fifteen-year period of Japan's "Sacred War" was a crucial time in the nation's cultural history. We find perceptive accounts in English — by authors such as Shea (1964), Keene (1971, 1976), Rubin (1984), Goodman (1991), Rabson (1998), Mayo and Rimer (2001), Atkins (2001), Powell (2002), High (2003), Victoria (2006), and Kushner (2006) (see Sources) — of how Japanese film, modern drama, literature, journalism, painting, jazz, and Zen Buddhism were co-opted into the war. But no specific study has been made, either within or outside Japan, of kabuki during the war. In most histories of kabuki written by Japanese, the war years are simply erased. Let me cite two typical examples. Theater critic Toita Yasuji has written in some detail about kabuki after the war in his reminiscences, *Wartime and Postwar Recollections* (*Kaisō no senchū*

sengo, 1979). Toita treats wartime kabuki in half a dozen pages, mostly concerned with American bombing, and he does not mention a single war play. *Kabuki* (2003) is an excellent general introduction to kabuki written by Kawatake Toshio for a foreign, English-reading public. A short chapter on post-Meiji kabuki moves directly from the Great Kantō Earthquake in 1923 to American Occupation censorship in 1945. The intervening years, including the entire war, are elided. There are important exceptions.

Ōzasa Yoshio's massive eight-volume compilation of theater data, *History of Contemporary Theater in Japan* (*Nihon gendai engeki shi*), includes three volumes devoted to the war years (volume 3 contains kabuki records, newspaper and magazine excerpts, conferences, theater regulations, and performance data). Okamoto Shirō includes a useful summary account of wartime kabuki in one chapter of *Kabuki o sukutta otoko* (translated and adapted by Samuel L. Leiter as *The Man Who Saved Kabuki*). Brian Powell discusses twentieth-century kabuki in *Japan's Modern Theatre*, and Samuel L. Leiter (in *The Man Who Saved Kabuki*) and Kodama Ryūichi have published useful chronologies of kabuki events during the war years (see Sources). Some Japanese scholars, writing immediately after the surrender, touched on the "distortions" of theater during the war years. Perhaps most important, the Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation, the major producer of kabuki, has preserved scripts and performance data from the war period in great detail. Unfortunately, Shōchiku's internal records that would cast light on company policies during the war were either destroyed by American bombs or are not available. For the most part, kabuki's role in the Fifteen-Year War has been almost completely ignored for the past sixty years. This book is an attempt to remember some of the more important aspects of kabuki's forgotten war from 1931 to 1945.

This is not a complete history of kabuki during the war. I do not trace actors' careers, as is often done in Japanese histories, nor do I describe the complete repertory. I introduce some one hundred new plays that relate directly or indirectly to the war and quote from a number of them. Even so, my analysis is cursory at best. Half a dozen government ministries and agencies attempted to guide and control kabuki during the war. I describe police censorship, the Citizens' Drama Movement, which tended to be hostile to kabuki, propaganda guidance emanating from the Bureau of Information, and noncommercial performances sponsored by the League of Touring Theaters. These and other government programs strongly affected kabuki during the war years. I also occasionally consider nō, *bunraku*, *shinpa*, and modern drama (*shingeki*) because the government generally treated these theater forms differently from kabuki.

I consider a new play "kabuki" when it was written for kabuki performance,

acted by kabuki actors, and advertised to the public as part a kabuki program. The performance may or may not have used traditional music and acting techniques. But what should be done if a new play was performed by kabuki and non-kabuki actors working together in a composite troupe? When kabuki actors temporarily worked with performers from other theater genres, I have omitted new plays they staged; when a troupe arrangement was ongoing and lasted for several years, I have included new plays staged by that group (for example the Vanguard Troupe that for decades has had kabuki and *shingeki* members).

It is now nearly half a century since the first lavish postwar "Grand Kabuki" (*ō-kabuki*) tours of Europe, America, and Asia gained the worshipful adulation of foreign audiences and critics. These tours, sponsored by the Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation and supported by the Japanese government, were a part of Japan's "cultural diplomacy" offensive, designed to erase memories of wartime horrors. Today, throughout the world, kabuki is an acknowledged artistic treasure. In hindsight it is easy to assume that kabuki's postwar ascent to international superstardom was inevitable. But this research makes clear that kabuki's survival in the 1940s was not assured by any means. It may surprise us, but commercial kabuki endured harsh and unremitting criticism through the war years. And in the early years of the war, when Japanese suffered through the Great Depression, the number of kabuki productions fell alarmingly. As the war grew in intensity, the question was increasingly asked: why should an extravagant art like kabuki be allowed to continue?

Further, important officials in the Home Ministry, Education Ministry, and Bureau of Information believed that kabuki was immoral and therefore an impediment to winning the war. Unsympathetic critics mocked kabuki's claim to be a high art. In 1944 and 1945, when Japan's Imperial Armed Forces were being annihilated and Japanese cities were burning, kabuki troupes were hard put to mount public performances. Kabuki was close to death in August 1945, when the war ended. That kabuki did not die under the American occupation that followed the war is a fascinating and complex story. In Chapter 12, as an addendum, I briefly touch on how kabuki continued its war with America for another two years after Emperor Hirohito's surrender. In the end kabuki prevailed, but not in the form that either wartime Japanese governments or the postwar American Occupation hoped for.

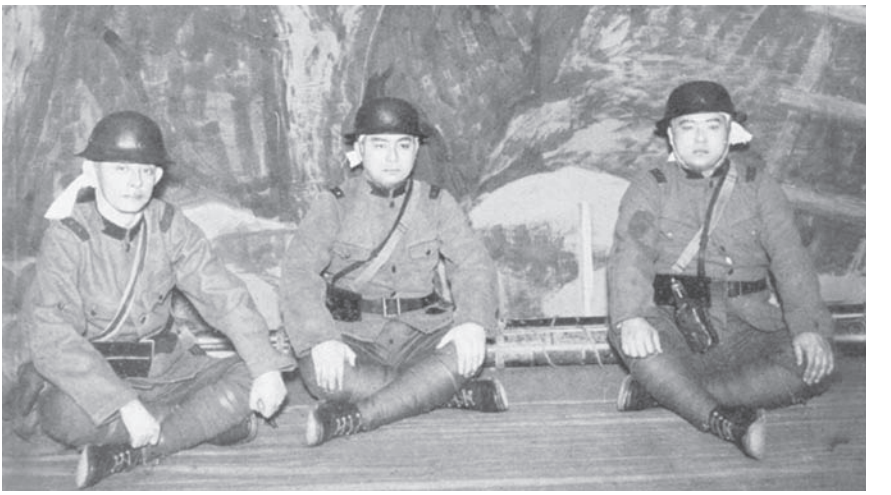
I have been shaken and depressed more times than I wish to remember reading sixty- and seventy-year-old accounts of the massacre of many tens of thousands of Chinese civilians in Nanking and Singapore; of thirty thousand Japanese and American soldiers mutually slaughtering each other on Iwo Jima; of hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children burning to death in

American "terrorist" fire bombings of Japanese cities; and of lone Japanese pilots killing hundreds of American sailors each in kamikaze crashes off Okinawa. So many unspeakable horrors were committed in the name of Japan's Sacred War and in the Allies' counterattack. One may reasonably hold a range of opinions regarding the rightness and wrongness of many aspects of the war. But one thing is certain: the kabuki world participated wholeheartedly in the national war effort, especially through the constant creation of new kabuki plays about contemporary Japan-at-war, thus putting a lie to the claim that kabuki in the 1930s and early 1940s was a dusty museum of classic drama.

I use English terms as much as possible in the text. An index of play titles gives English and Japanese play titles. Most kabuki actors graduate to higher-ranking names during their careers. To avoid using several names for one person, I use the name by which an actor is best known: other names used during the war period can be found in an index of actors' names. Since my aim is to describe events primarily from a Japanese perspective, dates are given in Japan time, that is, one day later than in the United States. For example, the bombing of Pearl Harbor occurred on December 8. I follow the Japanese system of giving a person's family name first followed by the given name. Place-names appear as they were known in Japan during the war; pinyin spellings of Chinese proper names follow in parentheses.

PART ONE

Kabuki's Foreign Adventure | 1931 – 1939



Three kabuki stars, (left to right) Ichimura Uzaemon XV, Onoe Kikugorō VI, and Bandō Hikosaburō VI, dressed in mundane army uniforms of the 1930s, play three army privates in *Three Heroic Human Bombs,* Kabuki-za, March 1932. (Courtesy Tsubouchi Memorial Theater Museum of Waseda University)

CHAPTER ONE

Prelude to War

March friends! Now! To Rome!
—*Mussolini*, kabuki play by Osanai Kaoru, 1928

I believe we paid a fine for disturbing public morals.
—Kabuki actor Nakamura Ganjirō II, 1928

Ennosuke and his faction . . . began to stage revolutionary theater.
—Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation, 1931

Kabuki's place in Japanese society between 1931 and 1945 closely followed the trajectory of the "Fifteen-Year War" being waged by the Greater Japanese Empire against China, Britain, Holland, Australia, and the United States. When the war on the mainland began in 1931, the entire kabuki world echoed the enthusiasm and sense of pride that accompanied Japan's early military victories in Manchuria and China. Kabuki's participation in the war encompassed a wide range of activities: creating new war plays, offering special programs for government guests, raising funds for the war effort, purifying the existing repertory, and touring morale performances to military audiences.

Kabuki was an honored art form, by and large, in the 1930s, and the institution of kabuki was expected to do its part in supporting the country's triumphant march to victory in the war. To the best of their ability most men running kabuki unconditionally supported the national crusade to build a new Asia under Japanese leadership. The Japanese military establishment achieved many immediate victories in warfare through its powerful tactic of attack, attack, attack, never retreat. The Japanese soldier was exhorted to "dash forward" (*maishin*) to achieve breathtaking success even in adverse circumstances.[1] For many years those responsible for managing kabuki were eager to "dash forward" on behalf of the nation at war. But how this should be done was neither simple nor immediately clear. Although it might appear to the untrained eye that "kabuki" was a monolithic art form, as were nō and *bunraku*, artistically it was schizophrenic. Presented to the public as a compound art of song, dance,

and acting skill (*ka-bu-ki*), it also contained within itself numerous elements of earlier theater forms, nō, *kyōgen,* and *bunraku* among them. But even more important, kabuki occupied an indeterminate social status. It was an "old theater" (*kyūgeki*) bound to the Tokugawa feudal past whose classic plays promoted the virtues of *bushidō,* loyalty to one's feudal master, and the duty of honorable self-sacrifice (*gisei*). At the same time, it was a creature of the moment, capable of being molded to suit the unique spirit of the times (*jikyokusei*). These two faces of kabuki's nature were in constant tension and often in open war with each other. As a result, kabuki's place during the war years was strongly conflicted.

The old and the new sides of kabuki are well-reflected in the programs of plays that were staged in the war years, 1931–1945. Many kabuki productions during the war had little or nothing to do overtly with government war policies. A program of plays produced in 1944, at the climax of the all-engrossing war, could well have been the same as one seen in 1924 or 1964, two decades before or two decades after the war. It could have been made up entirely of "old" traditional plays set in Japan's historical past and well known to audiences for a century or more, plays like the glorious drama of feudal revenge *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* (1749, Fig. 1.1), the erotic comedy *Love Letter from the Licensed Quarter* (1780), or the delicate dance piece *The Wisteria Maiden* (1826). But hundreds of other kabuki playbills contained newly written war plays (*sensōgeki*) or military plays (*gunjigeki*) powerfully connected to the ongoing war of the 1930s.

We can identify three main types of war or military plays performed in kabuki theaters during the war years. The most striking of these in terms of their subject matter were "overnight pickle" (*ichiyazuke*) plays that directly dramatized current military actions (Fig 1.2). Many of these were "beautiful stories" (*bidan*) of heroic battles based on newspaper accounts and newsreels.[2] Overnight pickle plays were so called because, like hastily pickled radishes, scripts were rushed to the stage within days or weeks of a breaking news event. Like TV docudramas today, *ichiyazuke* plays exerted a powerful emotional hold on audiences because the wartime stories were well known to audiences and emotionally affecting. Here is a newspaper comment about an overnight pickle play staged by kabuki actors at the Minami-za in Kyoto in spring 1942,[3] shortly after a Japanese youth, dubbed the Tiger of Malaya,[4] helped imperial forces capture Singapore: "Every newspaper carried reports of our Imperial Armed Forces' brilliant strategy of a lightning attack against the Malay Peninsula that astounded the world. Against this background of military exploits, the bold actions of a passionate youth, the Tiger of Malaya, were brought vividly onto the stage!"[5] As we will see in

Fig. 1.1. Kabuki's ubiquitous drama of revenge and loyalty *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* was staged in part or in full more than one hundred times during Japan's "Fifteen-Year War." In the final scene, chief clan retainer Ōboshi Yuranosuke (Matsumoto Kōshirō VIII) fulfills his debt of obligation (*giri*) to his lord, Enya Hangan, by taking the head of Hangan's enemy, Kō no Moronao. (Courtesy Don Kozono)

the following chapters, kabuki playwrights turned out more than one hundred overnight pickle plays set during Japan's Fifteen-Year War.

A second type of new kabuki drama, the so-called new-history play (*shinjidaigeki*), flourished during the 1930s, largely as a response to the militaristic mood of the times. According to drama critic Miyake Shūtarō, the term was coined to describe a series of long, serious dramas playwright Mayama Seika began composing in the late 1920s in which he retold Japanese history.[6] "New" (*shin*) referred to the contemporary ideal of loyalty to the emperor that Mayama anachronistically attributed to warriors, generals, and shoguns from the feudal past — Oda Nobunaga, Regent Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Shogun Tokugawa Ieyasu, Hōjō Tokimune, Kiso Yoshinaka, and others. It was necessary to rewrite history because heroes in kabuki's traditional plays — *Kumagai's Battle Camp, The Village School, The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* — were loyal to feudal lords, not to the emperor.

Fig. 1.2. Early overnight pickle kabuki war plays often depicted praiseworthy deaths of individual soldiers. In Kawamura Karyō's *Reborn in Bombing,* Seiichi (Ichikawa Ennosuke II) dies rescuing his comrades. The acting is relatively realistic. Kabuki-za, September 1937. (Author's collection)

Third were plays set from approximately 1850 to 1870 during the chaotic transition from the Tokugawa feudal era to the so-called restoration of imperial rule and the start of the Meiji era. They can be considered a subset of new-history plays. It was natural for statesmen and ordinary citizens of that period to declare fanatical devotion to the young man who would become the Meiji emperor and to the new imperial state he would rule. Mayama wrote about men like General Nogi Maresuke, the hero of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, whose deeds were only a few decades in the past. Nativist scholars, from the time of Motoori Norinaga a century and a half earlier, had called Japan the "imperial country" (*mikuni*) and the emperor a divinity whose rule was destined to extend over all of the world. It remained for scholars of the Meiji era to propound the ideal of absolute loyalty to the imperial state.[7] In

Fig. 1.3. Imamura Shin'ichirō's *Moon Castle* illustrates the clash of old and new in the early Meiji era. Clan lord Sadaharu (Ichikawa Ennosuke II) and mistress Tatsue (Bandō Shūchō IV) wear old-fashioned kimono, while chief retainer Bunnojō (Ichikawa Sadanji II) is dressed in a Western suit and sports a short modern haircut. Tōkyō Gekijō, November 1936. (Author's collection)

scores of plays set in the early Meiji era, historical figures were refigured and updated to provide models that imperial citizens in the 1930s could emulate (Fig. 1.3).

Between 1933 and 1945, dozens of playwrights turned out some sixty "new-history" plays for kabuki production. The Cabinet Bureau of Information (the government's main propaganda agency) and publicity sections of the army and navy ministries urged kabuki playwrights to compose overnight pickle plays and new-history plays in support of the war. And kabuki's great star actors, Onoe Kikugorō VI, Nakamura Kichiemon I, Matsumoto Kōshirō VII, Nakamura Baigyoku III, and Ichikawa Sadanji II, without exception, performed these plays on behalf of Japan's self-imposed mission to refashion Asia.

Japan began its intractable war with China in 1931 under the modest rubric of the Manchurian Incident, or Manshū Jihen. The term *jihen* suggested an event of limited scope and short duration. Japanese journalists and scholars often said the conflict was a war (*sensō*), and some official pronouncements deemed it a holy or sacred war (*seisen*). But the Japanese government carefully

refrained from declaring war on China during the 1930s in order to avoid belligerent nation status. Under international law, a belligerent Japan could not import vital gasoline and steel from the neutral United States. It was essential for Japan to buy oil and steel abroad to continue the nation's military buildup. Certainly officers leading Japan's Kwantung Army in Manchuria earnestly desired a small conflict that would be speedily resolved. Resolution depended, the Japanese asserted, on the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek (Jiang Jieshi) adopting a reasonable attitude: suppress anti-Japanese boycotts, acknowledge Japan's legitimate interests on the continent, and, especially, "cooperate" with its island neighbor. For four centuries greedy Western powers had colonized and exploited Asian nations. The Japanese military establishment as well as ordinary Japanese citizens eagerly accepted a national mission to end the unjust era of imperialism imposed by England, Holland, France, Spain, Portugal, and, most recently, the United States. Honor and glory would accrue to the Japanese people for courageously assuming the burden of leadership in China and Asia.[8]

In 1937, Japan expanded the war through the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, which led within months to large-scale fighting in the China Incident. These attacks against Manchuria and China, following the model of European and American imperialism in Asia, gave every indication of success. But when Japanese armies occupied Manchuria and captured Shanghai and the northern and southern Chinese capitals, Peking and Nanking (now Beijing and Nanjing), this did not lead to "peace in Asia," which successive Japanese governments proclaimed was the ultimate aim of the conflict in China. To the contrary, each tactical advance on the continent required the homeland to provide more troops and more armaments as well as more spiritual commitment by ordinary citizens, the emperor's subjects. As the government and the people of Japan advanced ever deeper into their continental quagmire, made up equally of ideals of Japanese spiritual superiority and sheer military brutality, all the nation's resources were eventually devoted to fulfilling the bottomless demands of a militarized state. In the end, Japan was embarked on total, all-engrossing war. It was not clear how "old" kabuki should function in the "new" Japanese empire whose expanding boundaries so exceeded those of kabuki's feudal era.

It is unquestionably true that Japan's war on the continent stimulated and invigorated almost all kabuki artists in the 1930s. The war was novel and interesting. Playwrights graphically dramatized bloody battles on the mainland in exciting overnight pickle plays and modernized many of Japan's traditional warrior heroes. New plays were rarely staged alone on kabuki bills. Producers

during the war continued the Tokugawa period practice of providing audiences with a balanced program of old and new plays. Therefore, as we examine the many overnight pickle plays and new-history plays that chart the fever course of the war, we should remember that old standbys still made up the bulk of kabuki programs from 1931 to the end of the war in 1945.

Overnight Pickle Plays and the Sino-Japanese War, 1894–1895

Japan's war with China that began August 1, 1931, was not a wholly unique confrontation, either for the Japanese people or for kabuki. Japan had won astounding victories in two previous modern wars, the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and a decade later the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Kabuki theaters during the first Sino-Japanese war (Nisshin Sensō) mounted nine overnight pickle war plays within months of the war's beginning. High-class audiences in Tokyo in 1894 reveled in *Japan's Great Victories* at the Haruki-za, while at the Meiji-za, the innovative kabuki actor and director Ichikawa Sadanji I played a Chinese for the first time in *Aizu Born: Meiji Raised*. Actor-manager Morita Kanya XII was featured at the Shintomi-za in *A True Account of Continuous Army and Navy Victories*.[9] In Osaka young kabuki actors marched victoriously across the stage in *The Japan-China Incident: Whispers of Victory* at the Kado Gekijō (Kado-za), *Victory in Battle* at the Asahi-za, *Greater Japan's War Victory* at the Fukui-za, *Victory for the Japanese Spirit*, subtitled *A Million Cheers for Our Empire,* at the Naka-za, and *Japan's Great Victories* at the Benten-za.[10] Typically, productions featured spectacular battle scenes that sang the greatness of Japan's modernized military (Fig. 1.4). They contributed mightily to the national war fever. Faced with new role types and contemporary dramatic situations, actors nonetheless relied on well-known kabuki performance techniques, or *kata*: rhythmic dialogue (*shichigochō*), elegantly patterned hand-to-hand sword combat movements (*chidori*, *yamagata*, and others), and off-stage sung narration (*chobo*) to aestheticize otherwise bloody scenes.[11]

In November 1894 at the Kabuki-za, the two reigning idols of the kabuki stage, Onoe Kikugorō V and Ichikawa Danjūrō IX, starred in the premiere of *Our National Flag Victorious on Land and Sea* written by the theater's staff playwright, Fukuchi Ōchi.[12] Kikugorō and Danjūrō, both of whom would die within the decade, were not praised, however, for their modern characterizations (Fig. 1.5). Critic Ihara Toshirō (Seiseien) sniffed, "Their creaking old bones inside the spiffy uniforms looked not at all heroic, but simply pitiful." As for the play, it was a failure because instead of showing battle scenes, the characters talked about them.[13] Ihara's contemptuous dismissal of play and

Fig. 1.4. *The Sino-Japanese War Illustrated,* edited by Ōkura Yasugorō in 1894–1895, shows dauntless Japanese soldiers overpowering helpless Chinese through 110 full-page color prints with text. Japanese wear "modern," and hence civilized, military uniforms in contrast to the outmoded robes of the Chinese that are useless in modern warfare. English captions indicate the book was intended for foreign as well as domestic readers. (Author's collection)

performance was typical of mainstream critical attitudes toward overnight pickle plays during all but the last years of the war. Critics went in with the expectation that a play about the war would be crass and hastily written, perhaps necessary to meet audience expectations but artistically inconsequential. As the war situation worsened and censorship control became more stringent, critics muted their sallies or turned to sarcasm to evade the censor's eye. We need to remember that masterpieces were rare events in theater anywhere in the world and at any time.

The most popular war play of 1894 was not performed by kabuki actors. The *shinpa* actor-producer Kawakami Otojirō roused audiences to thunderous patriotic cheers with his explosive production of *The Sublime, the Exhilarating Sino-Japanese War,* staged for standing-room-only crowds at the small Asakusa Gekijō in Tokyo that September. Kawakami became famous staging a series of "battle-report" plays based on news flashes from the front.

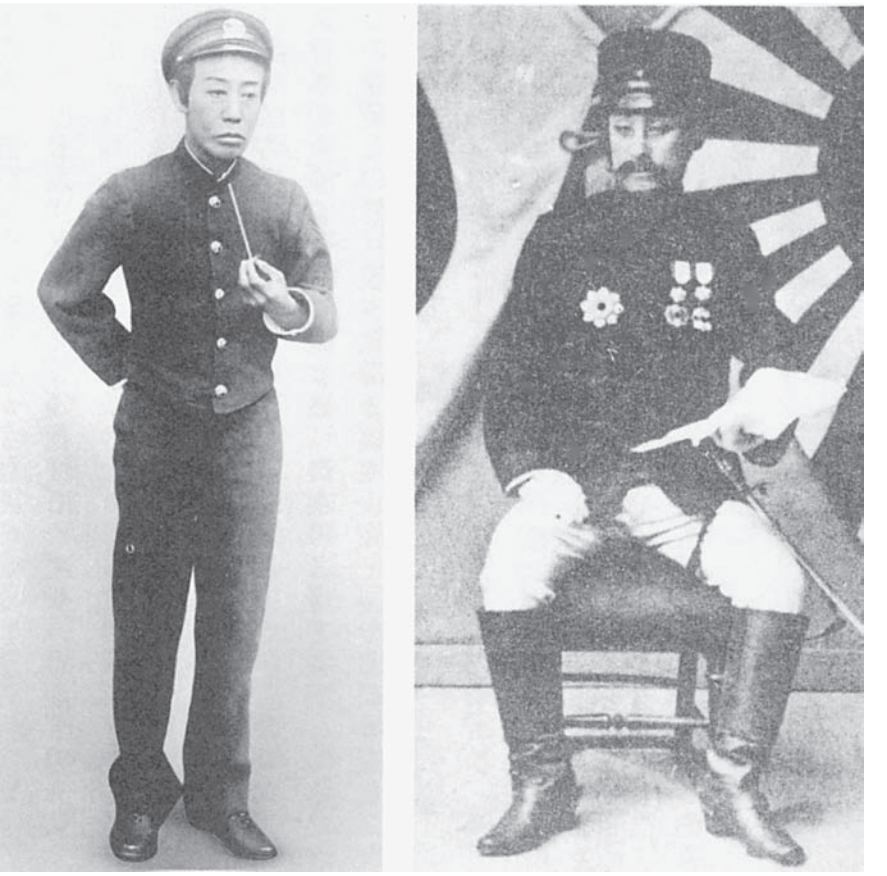


Fig. 1.5. Ichikawa Danjūrō IX (left) as Ordinary Seaman Kajizō and Onoe Kikugorō V (right) as Lieutenant General Obuchi in *Our National Flag Victorious on Land and Sea*, written by Fukuchi Ōchi, Kabuki-za, November 1894. The kabuki stars appear somewhat uncomfortable in Meiji period army and navy uniforms. (From Nagama Takeomi, ed., *Kabuki-za hyakunen shi, honbun hen, 1*)

Kawakami was the first Japanese actor to study and perform in Europe and America (1899–1900 and later). From his foreign experiences he introduced strong influences of Western melodrama to the new genre of Japanese spoken drama, called *shinpa*, or "new school" theater, in contrast to "old school" (*kyūha*) kabuki.

Kawatake Shigetoshi cites the relative failure of Danjūrō IX, Kikugorō V, and other kabuki actors in Sino-Japanese War plays, in comparison with Kawakami's huge success in *shinpa* war dramas, as evidence that 1894–1895 marked the end of kabuki as a "modern drama":

> Of course, new works derived from modern life were presented any number of times in later years, but they represented experiments of a collateral nature or special entertainments, and not new developments in the main stream. . . . At this juncture Kabuki . . . seems to have lost its contemporary quality which was capable of closely reflecting the present day, and to have become an increasingly classical and non-contemporary drama.[14]

I suggest that Professor Kawatake's statement is more hope than fact. As we will see in the following chapters, mainstream kabuki troupes continued to perform overnight pickle plays throughout the war.[15] I contend that kabuki's obsession with new plays about the present moment continued unabated for half a century longer than Kawatake suggests.[16]

Few kabuki dramas had been set in foreign countries in the past; this changed after 1894–1895 because of the experience of Japanese troops and civilians working, fighting, and living abroad. A war play like *Burning the Southern Capital*, staged at the Kabuki-za in 1906 to celebrate Japan's success in forming the South Manchurian Railway, naturally was set in Manchuria, and most roles were of fiercely painted Manchu warriors, not Japanese.[17] Kabuki actor Jitsukawa Enjaku II recalls taking part in numerous overnight pickle plays set in China when he was a child actor during the war. The invariable climax was a battle in which one or two intrepid Japanese soldiers nonchalantly defeated twenty or thirty Chinese, following the traditional format of a kabuki fighting scene (*tate* or *tachimawari*). "They would seize the Chinese by their pigtails, throw them to the ground, bind their wrists with their rosaries, and parade them into the audience on the *hanamichi*, crying, 'Long live Japan' (Nippon banzai)." The point was to demonstrate the "miraculous strength of the Japanese soldier."[18]

Onoe Kikugorō VI recalls in his childhood feeling deep repugnance when he was forced to play fall-guy Chinese soldiers in plays about the Sino-Japanese War. Before going on stage he assured the gods, "I am really a Japanese boy and not Chinese." In his child's eyes, his father, Kikugorō V, striking a ferocious *mie* pose in the finale of a war play, embodied "a true warrior serving our Great Imperial Nation."[19]

Japanese victories in China and Korea (the war was fought primarily for control of the Korean peninsula) were the occasion for unrestrained celebration among all classes. As Donald Keene tells us, the Meiji emperor composed a nō song and the empress a nō play in praise of Japanese victories, and these were sung by "the two outstanding nō actors of the time, Hōshō Kurō and Umewaka Minoru."[20]

Overnight Pickle Plays and the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905

The Russo-Japanese War that occurred a decade later provided exciting dramatic material for several score of new kabuki plays about the war. In 1904, kabuki troupes in the Kansai region (Osaka and Kyoto) rushed more than twenty hastily written war plays into production at large and small theaters. The Japanese military began its attack on February 8, and six plays about the conflict with Russia were up and running in Kyoto's kabuki theaters by the end of March.[21] Osaka kabuki audiences were treated to sixteen Russo-Japanese War overnight pickle plays between February and December. The titles of some indicate their bellicose, congratulatory tenor: *Victory in War: The Russo-Japanese Conflict*, *Scouts of Glory: Beautiful Tales of a Military Nation*, and *Ten Thousand Cheers for Greater Japan*.[22]

This was an era before instant electronic communication. Overnight pickle plays helped to satisfy the public's hunger for news of faraway battles in Russia. In April, the first year of the war, Kataoka Nizaemon XII starred in *Another Newspaper Extra: The Russo-Japanese War* at the Benten-za in Osaka, playing the role of an intrepid combat journalist.[23] The Kansai star Jitsukawa Enjaku II recalled that when the cry "Extra, extra!" was heard outside a theater, the lead actor invariably stopped the play, bought a copy of the extra, and read out the latest battle report to a wildly cheering audience. Compared to plays performed during the Sino-Japanese War, battle scenes now were handled more realistically and acting changed as well: "In the play *The Russo-Japanese War*, I acted an army captain's wife who was attacked by three or four Russian soldiers. My character fought a desperate struggle quite realistically. The old way of one person fantastically beating a large group of enemy did not seem logical."[24] One element of traditional kabuki, a hero against many enemies, was giving way to a more modern, perhaps more realistic, conception of stage combat. And while the war against Russia aroused a fervid theatrical response in the form of new overnight pickle plays, the war's unexpectedly high financial cost caused a drop in theater attendance.[25]

General Nogi Maresuke, who ordered the bloody frontal attacks that at last overwhelmed the defenders of Port Arthur (Lüshun), was declared a great national hero. When the Meiji emperor died in 1912, Nogi, out of devotion to the emperor, committed ritual seppuku together with his wife. Nogi provided a virtually ideal model of patriotic behavior for the new imperial nation because of his war record (idealized at the time), his stoic acceptance of the death of two sons in the war, and his selfless suicide. As Robert Jay Lifton says, over time he was transformed "into a formidable instrument of militaristic and nation-

Fig. 1.6. Matsui Shōō's *Record of the Siege of Port Arthur,* Kabuki-za, June 1930. The playwright signals Japan's magnanimous policy by having the victorious General Nogi Maresuke (Ichikawa Sadanji II, left) extend a hand in friendship to defeated Russian Lt. General A. M. Stoessel (Morita Kanya XIII). (Author's collection)

alistic propaganda."[26] General Nogi's emblematic status as a patriot was such that eventually over forty kabuki, *shinpa*, and modern drama, or *shingeki*, plays were written about him through the 1930s.[27] Perhaps the most famous dramatization of Nogi's life and accomplishments was Mayama Seika's *General Nogi*, written as a trilogy. At the premiere of the middle play at the Meiji-za in 1932, kabuki innovator Ichikawa Sadanji II played a widely praised General Nogi (Fig. 1.6). Thereafter in many revivals Sadanji became closely identified with this role.[28] Mayama painted Nogi as a stern but generous leader, qualities that appealed to Japanese patriots. The audience saw a powerful Japan that treated its enemy generously, thereby flattering Japanese spectators and deflecting attention from the great human cost of this short but bloody war.[29]

Playwrights continued to be interested in the Russo-Japanese War for several decades. In 1927, the liberal *shingeki* playwright-director Osanai Kaoru wrote *The Battleship Mikasa* for Ichikawa Sadanji II. The play looked back with some nostalgia on the war, then two decades past. It was first staged at the Kabuki-za in November 1927, revived with a different kabuki cast at the Naniwa-za in Osaka in 1928, and revived again by the modern kabuki troupe the Vanguard Theater (Zenshin-za) in the 1940s.[30] The play begins with the Japanese-Russian

naval battle off the Tsushima Straits, May 27–29, 1905, which Osanai calls the "battle that determined the rise or fall of the Japanese Empire." The Japanese naval officers and sailors depicted by Osanai are uniformly noble and selfless. Standing resolutely on the bridge of the Japanese flagship the *Mikasa*, fleet commander Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō calmly exposes himself to enemy fire, explaining to his subordinates (Fig. 1.7):

TŌGŌ: My military code is to do my utmost without fail. Where there is loyalty, there will be divine assistance. Where there is divine assistance, there will be victory. I harbor but one thought. That is victory.

When the Japanese fleet closes to point-blank range, he quietly gives the order to fire. His staff begs him to move into the armored command tower for protection, but he modestly declines:

TŌGŌ: I am old. You have many years to serve your nation. Your lives are precious, not mine. You go into the tower. I like it here.

In the final scene, two days after the Russian fleet has been annihilated, Tōgō sends a message of admiration to the defeated Russian commander, Rear Admiral Nicolai Ivanovich Nebogatov, for steaming halfway around the world to reach the battle site:

TŌGŌ: Concerning your bravery and diligence in sailing your fleet the amazing distance of 15,000 nautical miles to join battle, I convey to you my respect.[31]

Here Osanai imagines magnanimous Japanese behavior toward a defeated enemy (a virtue that will not survive the brutal war soon to begin). Osanai conveys another side of the battle as well: he accurately includes an account of the terrible casualties suffered by men under Tōgō's command. During the sea battle, incoming Russian shells explode on the deck of the *Mikasa*, blowing jagged holes in the superstructure. Officers are dying all around the admiral and scores of wounded sailors are carried below deck to the ship's hospital. Kabuki actors developed more realistic acting styles to express these scenes of modern warfare (Fig. 1.8). And in May 1930, the Kabuki-za celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of Japan's glorious military victory by staging the premiere of Matsui Shōō's *Record of the Siege of Port Arthur* for an invited audience of five thousand army and navy officers and government officials.[32]

Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney asserts the overriding importance of these two wars in preparing the Japanese public to accept aggressive military policies in the 1930s and 1940s:

Fig. 1.7. Ichikawa Sadanji II enacts an impassive, impressive Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō in Osanai Kaoru's *The Battleship Mikasa*, Kabuki-za, November 1927. Tōgō stands aloof on the bridge of his flagship before ordering his ships to fire on the Russian Baltic Fleet. (Author's collection)

Fig. 1.8 Kabuki actors adopted more realistic styles of acting to suit contemporary battle scenes. Sawamura Tosshi VIII playing Admiral Tōgō's wounded orderly in *The Battleship Mikasa* realistically expresses intense pain and resolution. (Author's collection)

> It was Japan's double victory, first over Ch'ing China and then over Russia, that became the turning point in Japanese history that gave free rein to the state and that coopted many people who opposed the escalation of Japan's imperialism. Many Japanese were carried away with patriotic feelings, clearing a way for the state to accelerate its program of military and colonial ventures that led to its self-destruction in World War II.[33]

Overnight Pickle Plays and Contemporary Europe

Events in Europe in the 1920s also became part of Japan's contemporary world and consequently became potential dramatic material for kabuki *ichiyazuke* plays. In November 1927, Osanai Kaoru accepted an invitation to go to Moscow to attend celebrations marking the tenth anniversary of the founding of the Soviet Union. Osanai was cofounder in 1924, with Hijikata Yoshi, of the Tsukiji Shōgekijō (Tsukiji Little Theater) modern drama troupe and theater.

He was unquestionably the most honored stage director in Japan at the time.[34] En route home from Russia, Osanai stopped off in Rome, where he met and was greatly impressed by Prime Minister Benito Mussolini. Back in Tokyo, he dashed off a five-act biographical play (*denki geki*) titled *Mussolini* that lauded fascism. Osanai inscribed the script, "Written for Ichikawa Sadanji." With Sadanji playing a powerful Mussolini and Ichikawa Ennosuke II acting opposite him as socialist politician Giacinto Serrati, Osani's new play opened May 1928 at the Meiji-za to strong reviews and lots of "buzz."[35] Sadanji earned special praise for his skill in delivering Mussolini's long political speeches (Fig. 1.9). Newspaper publicity emphasized the extraordinary scale of Mussolini's grab for authority, marking the play as absolutely up-to-date:[36]

Hot-Blooded Prime Minister!

> *Mussolini* is now in performance. The man who saved Italy from chaos. Showing matchless energy as prime minister, home minister, foreign minister, and minister of war, navy, and air. Acclaimed with one voice throughout Europe and America! That man is Mussolini![37]

The final scene of Osanai's drama takes place in late October 1922, at the moment when the Fascist March on Rome cements Mussolini's rise to power. Mussolini speaks to his followers from the crown of a small hill:

> MUSSOLINI: Friends, at last the time has come for us to proudly march on Rome. [Japanese police censors deleted the next line: "Our march to Rome is the same as revolution."] We do not want anarchy. As Fascists we are responsible to construct a new and orderly nation. Fellow Fascists, remember what we have already achieved. Who rescued demobilized soldiers, cruelly attacked by hoodlums? We Fascists! Who saved helpless citizens from the hideous schemes of revolutionary mobs occupying our city halls? We Fascists! (*Loud cheering.*) Fellow Fascists of Italy! Let us marshal our strength as Romans! Forward! We have but one aim. Let us build a new Italy. March friends! Now! To Rome! (*Cheers: "To Rome, to Rome!" Fascist march music plays. Mussolini descends the hill with his supporters. Curtain.*)[38]

Mussolini greatly appreciated the play. In August 1928, two months after Sadanji closed the run of *Mussolini*, the actor led a large troupe on the first kabuki tour of Europe, performing in Moscow and Leningrad. Sadanji, like Osanai, visited Rome on his return home. Sadanji's fame portraying Mussolini preceded him, and as might be expected, Fascist writers hailed the actor as an international

Fig. 1.9. Playwright Osanai Kaoru's *Mussolini*, Meiji-za, May 1928. Benito Mussolini (Ichikawa Sadanji II, left) describes the Italian Fascist Party's great future to socialist politician Giacinto Serrati (Ichikawa Ennosuke II, right). (Author's collection)

culture hero. Mussolini granted Sadanji a private audience, impressing Sadanji with his lively humor.[39] When Sadanji died in 1940, the dictator sent a personal telegram of condolence.[40] We get some sense of the strong appeal of Fascism to many Japanese in 1928 when we note that four plays titled *Mussolini* were written that year, and three of them were immediately staged.[41]

The current kabuki critic Nakamura Tetsurō suggests that when the Kabukiza was rebuilt on a monumental scale in 1924 after being destroyed in the 1923 Kanto Earthquake, this encouraged writing and staging grandiose biographical history plays. He notes that Osanai was infatuated with panoramic historical themes at this time. Using Nakamura's terminology, Osanai did not intend *Mussolini* to be a psychological drama of the individual (*kojinteki gikyoku*). Rather it was a play about the masses (*shūdanteki gikyoku*) that expressionistically (*hyōgenshugi*) portrayed the forces of Fascism.[42]

Kabuki and the Great Depression

When Japan's war with China began in 1931, the country's economy, with kabuki in tow, was in stomach-churning freefall. The Wall Street crash of October 1929 signaled the beginning of a wrenching worldwide depression. Within a few years, American imports of Japanese silk declined by half, and high European and American tariffs gradually shut Japanese industrial products out of Western markets. Japanese farm families, made destitute by low agricultural prices, readily accepted government promises of a better life if they resettled in the "open expanses" of Manchuria and, later, northern China. Intellectuals in the cities searched for alternatives to an international capitalist system that had imploded. Many analysts, in and out of government, came to believe that state control, a la Italian Fascism, was a reasonable course of action to surmount Japan's mounting economic and social crises. As Ruth Ben-Ghiat has written of Italian Fascism: "Fascism's corporativist system offered an alternative to bankrupt capitalism and [Fascism's] nativist policies and disciple imperative would stem degenerative tendencies. Countering the standardization of body and soul supposedly fostered by both Communist societies and democracies, [Fascism] would integrate economic development with the celebration of the moral and the transcendental."[43] Kobayashi Ichizō, head of the Tōhō Theatrical Corporation and a major figure in financial circles, explained that Fascism was a natural arrangement under Japanese capitalism.[44] Others argued that a different form of state control — Marxist communism — offered a more powerful solution to the country's economic woes. Each was committed to state control of social and economic structures, thus blurring the line between the

two rival ideologies. Donald Keene points to wartime intellectuals who "were hoodwinked by Japanese fascism" because "it so much resembled socialism at first contact."[45]

Most theaters where kabuki was performed, especially in Tokyo, were owned and managed by the giant capitalist enterprise the Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation. Shōchiku's main competitor, the Tōhō Theatrical Corporation, occasionally staged kabuki productions as well. Neither company was immune from the economic turmoil of the depression years. It was a brute fact of economic life that when factory workers and office employees lost their jobs or took wage cuts, they cut back on entertainment. Naturally kabuki audiences declined. Several factors combined to make kabuki's economic situation during the war especially severe. First of all, live theater attendance in general had fallen drastically. Half of the live theaters in Osaka and Kyoto closed their doors between 1907 and 1937 (from thirty theaters to fourteen). Paralleling this, the amount of live stage performance of all kinds declined by two-thirds in Osaka and by one-half in Kyoto.[46] It is not possible to identify all the reasons for this steep decline, but in addition to the depression unquestionably motion picture entertainment posed strong competition for live theater.

Second, and far worse, was the stunning collapse of kabuki production in Kansai during these years. In 1907, kabuki programs were immensely popular in Osaka, making up close to two-thirds of all live entertainment. As many as twelve city theaters offered kabuki programs at the same time. But by 1937, kabuki performances had declined by 90 percent, and 80 percent of the theaters that were open were devoted to non-kabuki genres.[47] The situation was worse in Kyoto, where kabuki production declined 95 percent in the same period: in 1930 two live theaters remained open in Kyoto, the Minami-za and the Kyōto-za, and they staged just four months of kabuki programming between them during the year. During the entire year of 1937, a single month of kabuki production was seen in Kyoto, the city where kabuki was born in the early 1600s. This abysmal record was repeated in 1938.[48] Why this collapse in kabuki performance? The world was changing, and kabuki faced competition from half a dozen new forms of live theater that had not existed in the past. Non-kabuki troupes vied for precious space on fewer and fewer commercial stages. Kabuki's chief competitors were ten to twelve "new school" (*shinpa*) and "new drama" (*shingeki*) troupes influenced by Western realism; a swashbuckling troupe doing "new national drama" (*shinkokugeki*) sword plays; and fifteen to twenty light entertainment troupes performing family drama (*kateigeki)*, farce-comedy (*kigeki*), women's sword plays (*onna kengeki*), and young women's musical theater (*shōjo kageki*), of which the Tōhō Corporation's Takarazuka

was the major example. From the point of view of these "new" theater genres, kabuki was an old-fashioned relic of the past. A modest revival of kabuki production in Kansai would have to wait until 1942–1944, when vast wartime expenditures trickled cash down into the pockets and purses of ordinary citizens, who were then able to buy kabuki's very expensive tickets.

Knowledgeable people in kabuki recognized that their art was in trouble. Most worrisome was the widening gap between kabuki and its shrinking audience. Ōzasa Yoshio has identified several strands of the debate. Actors like Ichikawa Sadanji II, Ichikawa Ennosuke II, and Kawarazaki Chōjūrō IV supported new plays to "keep kabuki up-to-date and alive." Yet most audiences preferred the traditional repertory. Shōchiku's emphasis on staging classics amounted to "tourist kabuki" that entertained through spectacle and star acting. As early as 1920, the elitist, traditionalist kabuki policy of the Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation had been challenged by Tōhō president Kobayashi Ichizō: "Why is it that Shōchiku theaters are geared exclusively to the privileged class? Ticket prices are high and old plays are always performed. Aren't there plans to meet the people's demand for new plays at cheap prices?"[49] Kabuki playwright Kaneko Yōbun felt that kabuki could not fill four theaters in the capital every month. Kabuki required protection, and he wondered if it should be staged some months only, like an opera or ballet season in Europe. Distinguished playwright Yamamoto Yūzō suggested that kabuki was a treasure admired throughout the world, "but is it a treasure that can decorate our parlor shelves? I doubt it can be an important part of people's daily lives."[50] For those who wanted traditional kabuki to continue, the problem was that society had already grown away from Japan's feudal environment that had nourished kabuki in the past. The issue confronting kabuki partisans in the first years of the war was how to match kabuki dramas with the tastes of smaller contemporary audiences.

In a special section in the December 1931 issue of the monthly theater journal *Engei gahō* (Theater Arts Illustrated), leading theater figures addressed the question of kabuki's future during the world depression, writing under the umbrella title "Kabuki Production in a Time of Ordeals." Kobayashi Ichizō favored radical changes, which is not surprising for he was the founder of the innovative Tōhō Theatrical Corporation. In his article "A Dawning Era," Kobayashi claimed there were two types of kabuki lovers, a preservation faction (*hoshuha*) that wanted kabuki to remain as it was, and a reform faction (*kaishinha*) that believed kabuki should change. Preservationists feared that current changes in society spelled doom for the art (he implied the Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation was in this group). Reformists optimistically believed that

kabuki could renew itself in form and content, and could be compatible with a modern society. Kobayashi, firmly in the reformists' camp, saw no hindrance to incorporating Western music and dance into kabuki. "From this time forward we must be able to create a new citizens' theater for a dawning era." And what was this "new citizens' theater" (*shin kokumin engeki*)? Of course it was Takarazuka, the all-female song and dance formula that Kobayashi had created some fifteen years earlier to compete with kabuki. In Kobayashi's vision of the future, Takarazuka would replace traditional kabuki and become Japan's twentieth-century "national theater."[51]

Ōtani Takejirō, who personally supervised the bulk of commercial kabuki production in Tokyo as president of the Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation, did not accept Kobayashi's self-serving division of kabuki lovers into protectors *or* innovators. In his article "Premature Pessimism," Ōtani argued that there is only one kabuki and it encompasses traditional and new elements alike. He expressed complete confidence that kabuki — that is, Shōchiku's kabuki — would improve through change and would meet the needs of the times without falling into crisis. In short, Shōchiku's traditional kabuki, leavened by some contemporary material, would never fail to draw an audience.[52]

In this debate between Kobayashi and Ōtani, the nature of kabuki, and hence its future, was being contested in open forum. The year, 1931, was the year Japan went to war. Kabuki at this time was very much a part of the traditional and hence conservative fabric of Japanese society. Yet that position was not fixed or absolute. It was Shōchiku's general policy to support traditional kabuki, but it could not avoid some negotiating with reformist artists who were restless under Shōchiku control. Also, there might be space outside of Shōchiku's monopoly for experimental kabuki to try its wings. This certainly was what Kobayashi wished.

Kabuki outside Shōchiku

Pressure to change kabuki can be connected to three aspects of the political and economic turmoil in the 1930s. First, kabuki could not isolate itself from the currents of fascist, democratic, leftist, communist, and populist ideology that were swirling through educated circles. These ideals, all imported from the West, directly challenged kabuki's old feudal order and the traditional repertory's conservative content. Second, knowledge of modern Western acting and production styles, especially realism, was now relatively widespread among younger kabuki actors. Between 1919 and 1928, perhaps forty kabuki actors had visited Europe or America where they attended theater performances,

watched rehearsals, and observed actor training sessions. In 1919, Shōchiku bankrolled a seven-month study tour of Western theatre for Ichikawa Ennosuke II and two colleagues, Shōchiku's staff playwright for kabuki, Matsui Shōō, and Kabuki-za stage designer Tanaka Ryō. They returned home amazed by the incessant training of theater artists, Western dance without song (ballet), and the very loud voice of Enrico Caruso at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.[53] In 1928, when Ichikawa Sadanji II's troupe toured Russia, they saw theater performances and met with Stanislavski, Eisenstein, and other theater artists. And the same year, kabuki idol Ichimura Uzaemon XV observed theater during a leisurely tour of America and Europe. Third, during the worldwide depression of the 1930s, corporate management was forced to cut kabuki actors' salaries, causing great hardship among actors. This fueled resentment against the all-powerful control that capitalist ownership conferred on Shōchiku and added one more motive to break away.

In the late 1920s, a number of younger kabuki actors chafed at the closed, feudal environment of the Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation. This huge conglomerate, directed by twin brothers Ōtani Takejirō and Shirai Matsujirō, held a virtual monopoly of Grand Kabuki production in Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, and other major cities. The great majority of kabuki actors were contracted to Shōchiku, and they performed in Shōchiku-owned theaters in plays selected by Shōchiku producers or even by president Ōtani or chairman Shirai themselves. Especially, the forgotten walk-on actors in the chorus dressing room, the *ōbeya yakusha,* hoped for a more open production system in which they would be able to act good roles in adventuresome new plays. These were unsettling ideas that Shōchiku producers were loath to support. Here I will briefly describe some of the attempts to create new repertories and new organizational patterns outside of Shōchiku control.

The first kabuki actors to break their Shōchiku contracts were members of the Heart Troupe (Kokoro-za), 1925–1931, led by Kawarazaki Chōjūrō IV.[54] Chōjūrō was a progressive-minded actor from an old kabuki family of middle rank; his ancestors had acted in and managed licensed kabuki theaters in Tokyo for almost two hundred years.[55] Chōjūrō would turn out to be the most resilient, and successful, actor to leave Shōchiku management. In 1929, other young kabuki actors led by Ichikawa Ennosuke II's three brothers, Chūsha VIII, Kodayū II, and Juen II, formed the Theater for the Masses (Taishū-za), choosing as their first production Upton Sinclair's *Spy*, a sprawling melodrama in forty-five scenes. Also joining the group were Kawarazaki Chōjūrō from the Heart Troupe and kabuki actors Nakamura Kan'emon II, Kawarazaki Kunitarō V, and others. Some of these young actors may have had connections with the

Japanese Communist Party.[56] Their inaugural season consisted of three socially progressive plays: proletarian playwright Murayama Tomoyoshi's *The Sino-Japanese War*, Nishikawa Akira's *Incident at Lake Honkei* (*Benxi*), also set in the China war, and communist sympathizer John Reed's *Ten Days That Shook the World*.[57] As Faith Bach notes, "Their working class theater . . . was supported from the shadows by Ennosuke," but the new kabuki troupe did not survive past the three-day run of *Spy*.[58] Kan'emon experienced the full fury of kabuki's internal feudalism when the head of his acting family, Nakamura Utaemon V, expelled him from the family for his progressive politics, thus blackballing Kan'emon from major kabuki theaters for a decade. Kan'emon was in particularly bad favor with the Shōchiku organization because he also edited, as Bach says, "the radical *Gekisen* (Theater Wars) magazine which 'exposed' the inner policies of Shōchiku and the kabuki world generally."[59]

In December 1930, members of Theater for the Masses, with Ennosuke now at their head, regrouped under an earlier name, the Spring-Fall Troupe (Shunjū-za).[60] The group's first effort, opening New Year's Day 1931, was a dynamic adaptation of Russian V. I. Pudovkin's silent film *Storm over Asia*. The new company played to packed houses of enthusiastic spectators through its twenty-five-day run, and Ennosuke was unanimously praised for his powerful portrayal of a youthful Timur. Audiences cheered Ennosuke's spellbinding speeches calling for Asian races to wrest their independence from Western imperialists, and they roared with delight when kabuki actors broadly parodied arrogant British soldiers.

Bach calls attention to the vituperative description of Ennosuke's defection published in Shōchiku's official history, which links Ennosuke with Marxism:

> [In 1931] leftwing activities had become rife amongst the younger intelligentsia and student types, and in the Kabuki-za lower ranks too there appeared those of Marxist sympathies who agitated for the dissolution of the rank system and the amelioration of salaries. . . . When October came he [Ennosuke] petitioned Shōchiku for the reestablishment of his Spring-Fall Troupe he had started some years before. Shōchiku declined. . . . They left Shōchiku's employ en masse with the intention of overthrowing kabuki feudalism and fomenting a revolution. . . . Ennosuke and his faction went to the Ichimura-za after breaking with Shōchiku and there they began to stage revolutionary theater.[61]

To say that young kabuki actors are "fomenting a revolution" was a gross exaggeration and equating the demand for better wages with Marxism a cheap shot.

Ennosuke's company of seventy faced insurmountable resistance to its plan to create kabuki in Tokyo outside Shōchiku's commercial realm. The troupe was not cohesive, and it failed to sustain audience interest with its next productions. In March, the New Tsukiji Theater Troupe (Shin Tsukiji Gekidan) staged a *shingeki* version of *Storm over Asia*, undercutting the novelty of Ennosuke's production.[62] Financial backing promised by Shōchiku's rival, Tōhō, did not materialize, and right-wing gangsters threatened Ennosuke for doing "red" plays. Within a year Ennosuke returned to Shōchiku and the Spring-Fall Troupe became inoperative.[63] By February 1932, Ennosuke had become a member of Ichikawa Sadanji II's troupe under Shōchiku's wing.

In October 1932, young Tokyo actors of first- and second-tier kabuki families formed the Troupe for a New Theater (Gekidan Shin Gekijō) and mounted their first and only production. This was a translation of DeBose and Dorothy Heyward's *Porgy* (1927). It was an amazing play choice for kabuki actors. Playing in black makeup, Bandō Mitsugorō VIII (Porgy), Nakamura Matagorō II (Mingo), and Ichikawa Danjirō VII (Sporting Life), partnered with actresses Sugimura Haruko (Clara) and Itō Tomoko (Bess).[64] Alongside the beautiful young *shingeki* actresses, Nakamura Kanzaburō XVII performed the role of Maria in the kabuki tradition of the *onnagata*, the male actor of female roles. These were roles that challenged the actors' youthful inexperience. Perhaps to mollify its rambunctious younger kabuki actors, Shōchiku shoehorned the vanity production into the Tōkyō Gekijō on October 29 and 30, between the theater's regular October and November productions. For undisclosed reasons, Shōchiku was willing to eat the losses of the two-day run.[65] The kabuki actors in the new theater troupe were artistically radical but politically uninvolved. Two other American social protest plays were staged by proletarian *shingeki* troupes in the 1930s: Elmer Rice's *Street Scene* by the Tsukiji Theatre Troupe, May 1932, and Murayama Tomoyoshi's production of Sidney Kingsley's *Dead End* by the New Cooperative Theater, September 1938.[66] It does not seem to be mere coincidence that the plays all depict institutionalized poverty in America that creates propertyless, that is, proletarian (*musansha*), blacks in *Porgy* and in *Street Scene* and *Dead End*, white gangsters and slumlords.

These break-away groups normally consisted of a core of kabuki actors plus some *shinpa* or *shingeki* actresses. Beginning in 1912, the Teikoku Gekijō established an acting school within its new theater building designed to train young women to a professional level of acting skill. Through the 1920s, female graduates of the acting school, such as Mori Ritsuko, Murata Kikuko, Kawamura Kikue, and Hatsuse Namiko, became part of the Teikoku Gekijō's regular, con-

tract acting company along with mainline kabuki actors — Matsumoto Kōshirō VII, Ichikawa Jukai III, Otani Tomoemon VI, and Morita Kanya XIII.[67]

The fervor in the Kansai area for new kabuki plays and alternative systems of organization was, if anything, even more pronounced and long-lived than in Tokyo. In 1931, the important Osaka kabuki actors Nakamura Ganjirō II and Bandō Jusaburō III joined with other actors and young actresses to offer a Combined New and Old (Shinkyū Gōdō) program of four modern plays at the Naniwa-za in March. The most striking piece on this first of many "combined programs" was a translation of Heinrich Mann's *The Blue Angel.* Jusaburō played Professor Doctor Immanuel Rath (Unrat), Nakamura Ganjirō was the student Reinhardt, and actress Kawamura Kikue took the role of seductive cabaret singer Lola (Lola Lola). The play carefully reproduced the German milieu and characters of Josef Von Sternberg's 1930 film that made Marlene Dietrich an international star.[68] *The Blue Angel* was scandalous enough to encourage at least one kabuki imitation, *The Wandering Crucifix*, in which Bandō Jusaburō III played Bishop Johannes, a Christian priest who is lured by the carnal attractions of German cabaret. Local playwright Nakano Minoru's three-act clone of Mann's dramatic situation was produced by Shōchiku as part of the Naka-za's August 1933 kabuki program.[69]

Others in the extended family of Kansai kabuki artists experimented with new theatrical materials and organizations as well. In 1931, a group of local kabuki playwrights, led by Shōchiku house playsmith Ōmori Chisetsu, announced that because "Kansai kabuki lacks appeal for modern audiences" they pledged to form a new producing group, the Troupe of Reinvigorated Kabuki (Kōsei Kabuki Gekidan), that would "address the times" by staging "new plays without forgetting the spirit of kabuki." Shōchiku approved the effort, and so the group was able to cast from among Shōchiku actors and use Shōchiku's Bunraku Theater in Osaka in July 1931. For their first and only program, four new plays by member playwrights were presented by a combined cast of young actors from traditional kabuki families — Nakamura Gannosuke I, Jitsukawa Yaozō III, Arashi Kichisaburō VII, and Ichikawa Kudanji — together with actresses.

The actors planned a rapid-paced program they hoped would draw a younger audience to kabuki.[70] The desire to broaden kabuki's appeal is seen in the efforts of others as well. In August 1934, twelve kabuki walk-on actors in Osaka formed the Chorus Room Actors' Play Reading Club to introduce old and new kabuki scripts to the public through dramatic readings. The low-ranking actors also hoped the readings would show they could play leading roles, thereby

advancing their acting careers.[71] Most of these breakaway groupings did not survive as organizations. But the ferment that had fueled their formation did not completely disappear in the Kansai area. Actresses regularly performed with kabuki actors and performers continued to seek younger audiences. Finally, a surprising number of middle-ranking kabuki actors in Osaka made the break from Shōchiku, and they performed largely outside the confines of the company's Grand Kabuki structure through the war years.[72]

For the most successful and influential defection from the Shōchiku corporate model we must look to the Vanguard Theater established in Tokyo, May 1931, by Kawarazaki Chōjūrō IV, Nakamura Kan'emon II, Kawarazaki Kunitarō V, and other discontented kabuki actors. Its organization came on the heels of Ennosuke's return to Shōchiku and the breakup of Ennosuke's Spring-Fall Troupe. Remarkably, the Vanguard Theater survived the war (1931–1945) and the American occupation of Japan (1945–1952), and it continues to be active in the twenty-first century.[73] The troupe's organizational statement addressed three major issues that prompted its thirty young members to strike out on their own: income security for actors, a progressive repertory, and a democratic troupe organization. They could achieve none of these goals working under Shōchiku: "The Vanguard Theater will exert all its efforts to guarantee members' livelihood from the income generated by the troupe and create a theater that meets the progressive demands of the common people. A general meeting of all troupe members will be the highest decision-making organ."[74]

The first decade was rocky. Naturally Shōchiku barred the renegade performers from using the many theaters under its control. The troupe turned to independent venues like the old-line Ichimura-za (until it burned down in May 1932 and was not rebuilt) and to theaters owned by Tōhō. More than any other large troupe of that era, it went on the road for months at a time. It played one-night and two-night stands in provincial theaters and for school audiences both as a matter of principle and because it had no choice since it was locked out of many large urban theaters. Eventually the troupe succeeded, and Bach believes that Ennosuke's help behind the scenes was crucial to that success: "given [the Vanguard Theater's] oppressive circumstances, without Ennosuke's backing Kan'emon and his friends could never have got as far as they did, nor garnered the support, in personnel and public sympathy, to create this new troupe."[75]

Audiences gradually came to know that a Vanguard production with two or three disparate plays on a bill would have broad appeal. A bravura kabuki classic like *Narukami the Thundergod* would be paired with a late Edo period domestic kabuki play by Mokuami or a new-history play. At least one piece

would offer roles for the troupe's young actresses. As Brian Powell notes, the Vanguard Theater did not develop a repertory solely of proletarian plays nor did it do much to encourage new playwrights.[76] The troupe tried out a farce-comedy, *Yaji and Kita's Proletarian Shank's Mare*, subtitled *A Lumpen Version*, in Okayama and Tokyo in the group's first season. In this leftist version, Yajirōbei and Kitahachi, the antiheroes of this beloved comedy, were transformed from bumbling Edo period merchants into prat-falling overall-wearing 1930s workingmen. When audiences did not respond, the company set aside ideology and returned to a nonpolitical version of Yaji and Kita's escapades.[77] In the following year the troupe toned down the political thrust of Muramatsu Shōfū's *Human Famine* by blunting the ideological debates between the swordsman Hirote Miki and his friend-antagonist Kōzuki Azusa, a "revolutionary agitator."[78] Other plays clearly show the Vanguard Theater's fundamental commitment to social justice. In Osaka in 1935, the troupe engaged proletarian playwright Kubo Sakae to direct the company in an adaptation of Elmer Rice's *Street Scene*, localized and set in the Tokyo slums.[79] And in 1938 proletarian theater artist Murayama Tomoyoshi was engaged to stage the premiere of his history play *Takadaya Kahei*. The play sympathetically portrayed the lifelong efforts of the pioneer Hokkaido settler Takadaya to cement friendly relations between Japan and Russia.[80]

From the beginning, the Vanguard Theater was deeply in debt. At the end of the first year the general membership voted to set aside populist ideals and stage *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*, the feudalist kabuki classic, at the Ichimura-za. In exchange the Ichimura-za management gave Vanguard financial support. Critics noted that director-critic Atsumi Seitarō gave the production a "realistic" interpretation and praised Chōjūrō and Kan'emon for infusing genuine emotion into the cliché-encrusted roles of a heroic Ōboshi Yuranosuke and a victimized, innocent Enya Hangan.[81] This approach would become the standard Vanguard take on kabuki classics: actors exhaustively exhumed characters' true emotions from under layers of conventionalized acting business while the overall form of traditional kabuki performance was maintained. By the mid-1930s, the Vanguard Theater was edging back into the conservative fold with its half-new, half-traditional approach to staging well-known kabuki plays.

Among the small impulses toward nonconformity in kabuki that flashed brightly across the kabuki firmament for a brief moment in the early 1930s, the Vanguard Theater alone maintained an independent existence apart from Shōchiku and Tōhō. But almost without exception, by the end of the decade the slightest tinge of progressive ideology within kabuki had been washed

away in the mounting tide of militarism and nationalism that was steadily engulfing the nation. This included the Vanguard Theater as well.

Beginnings of Modern Control and Censorship of Kabuki

Two years into the world depression, in 1931, the Imperial Army began Japan's second war with China, thereby unleashing powerful patriotic and antiforeign feelings within the country. Under the twin pressures of an external war and domestic economic ills, Japanese society turned in on itself. The government developed both positive and negative policies to guide national culture that profoundly affected kabuki during the war. Many people considered that kabuki was de facto Japan's "national theater." Because of its (argued) importance, government agencies charged with controlling, guiding, and harnessing art and culture in support of the war had to consider the case of kabuki with great seriousness (audiences for nō and *bunraku* were too small to be consequential, and *shingeki* was a separate matter).

In 1895, the second year of the Russo-Japanese War, government offices levied several types of taxes on theatrical performance. Theater owners paid a tax based on the size of the house, and producers paid an admission tax (starting at 10 percent) for each ticket sold. Actors were also charged a tax (*haiyūzei*) levied according to their individual rank: kabuki star Onoe Kikugorō V (rank one) paid ¥180, while an unknown country actor (rank nine) was taxed ¥2. The actor's tax functioned as a government licensing system for two thousand professional kabuki actors: you could not perform without a license.[82] Taxing and licensing would go through changes but would persist in one form or another through the end of World War II.

The most intrusive government control of kabuki during the war years was pre-production censorship of play scripts (Fig. 1.10). Modern control of kabuki and other theater genres began in 1900, when the Tokyo Metropolitan Commissioner of Police issued ordinance 41: "Theater Control Regulations." Most of the ordinance's five sections, fifty-one articles, and seventy-nine subarticles regulated theater structures, fire prevention, audience control, ticket prices, and the like. Producers were required to submit play scripts and receive police permission to perform. The police censor fixed a stamp on the title page to show approval and indicated deletion (*sakujo*) of offending passages with red notations or stamps.

Section 2, article 23, subarticle 4 forbad dialogue or action that could "raise fears of damaging public order (*kōan*) or local moral customs (*fūzoku*)."[83] In kabuki, improper political thought that might "damage public order" was rare

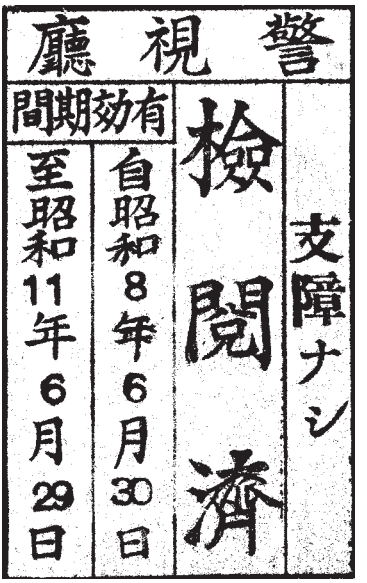


Fig. 1.10. A single censorship stamp of the "Metropolitan [Special Higher] Police" on the inside cover of Tsubouchi Shōyō's kabuki dance play *Onatsu's Madness* passes the play for production. The stamp says "no faults" have been found, "censorship is completed," and performances "are authorized from June 30, 1933, to June 29, 1936." (Courtesy Shōchiku Ōtani Library)

and usually limited to illegal impersonation of the imperial family. Throughout the Tokugawa period, kabuki actors had portrayed ancient emperors and imperial family members in *ōchōmono* or *ōdaimono*, plays of dynastic rule.[84] But in order to bolster the image of the Meiji emperor as a deity, censors banned the practice in 1900. For example, in 1933 and again in 1935, police censors pronounced planned kabuki productions of *The Tale of Genji* "unsuitable" and forbad placing Genji, son of an eleventh-century emperor, on stage.[85] Few such cases arose during the war as producers practiced careful self-censorship. However, censors were very busy banning productions of kabuki scripts they considered immoral, erotic, or obscene. Osaka censors ruled the sexual exploits in *Saikaku's Life of a Man* too racy for 1934 audiences, even though the play had been allowed on the stage of the Kabuki-za in 1928. In rewritten form, the script was finally allowed at the Naniwa-za later that year. It had been considerably toned down and retitled *The Life of a Genroku Man* by playwright Ikeda Daigo.[86] At the Kabuki-za in December 1937, the great Onoe Kikugorō VI was scheduled to play Kisen, a libidinous monk of the Heian era, in the traditional dance play *The Six Poet Immortals*. Just before the opening, a police censor sarcastically asked Kikugorō if Kisen's dalliance with a teahouse maid "contributed to current national policy." It did not, and the censor ruled the dance's "decadent" lyrics must be changed.[87]

Kabuki lore is replete with stories from the 1930s and early 1940s of censorship gaffes that repel and amuse us at the same time. One censor forbad bare

feet on the kabuki stage, so that Okaru and Kanpei, the lovers in *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*, had to wear white cotton *tabi* to cover their "sensuous extremities," thereby muffling the "erotic sense of the scene."[88] Actors were not allowed to say "love suicides" (*shinjū*) in their dialogue, but censors approved scenes in which two lovers killed themselves. A Yokohama censor deleted the word *suke* because "I don't know the word and you can't perform something I don't understand."[89]

Authority for theater censorship as well as censorship of films, newspapers, books, and phonograph recordings was vested in the Special Higher Police, a division of the Police Department within the Home Ministry devoted to the guidance (*shidō*) and control (*tōsei*) of undesirable thought.[90] Police were authorized to forbid a proposed theater production or to halt an objectionable performance at any time. It was easy for Special Higher Police headquarters in Tokyo to handle most film, book, and record censorship because most media companies had their head offices in the city. Centralized film censorship became so routine that in the 1930s the Shōchiku Corporation published a monthly newsletter for its film distributors called, unambiguously, *Shōchiku Censorship News* (*Shōchiku ken'etsu nyūsu*). Each issue listed the location and length of cuts mandated by the Tokyo police censor. For example, in 1932 the censor ordered an immoral section deleted from the "all talkie" war film *The First Step to Shanghai*: "Reel eight, cut 'Don't you think it would be a bit of fun to tell a lie?' from number 64 to number 67 (one meter)." In other cases, the censor deleted hundreds of meters of objectionable film.[91] Typically, a censored film script required the approval of up to twenty-four sections and subsections of the Home Ministry, including a stamp of approval from the office of the Home Minister (Fig. 1.11).

Live theater troupes, scattered throughout the country as they were, presented a special problem. Most troupes never came within Tokyo or Osaka police jurisdiction. Instead, the 1,730 professional theater troupes, including nearly two hundred kabuki troupes, submitted their play scripts to Special Higher Police officials in dozens of locations.[92] And since each local policeman tended to be a law unto himself, theater censorship was hopelessly idiosyncratic and unpredictable. Here is a firsthand description of the process from a producer's point of view:

> First, in order to stage a play, ten days before opening, you have to submit two copies of the play script to the superintendent of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police. . . . However, in many cases, a play approved in Tokyo is

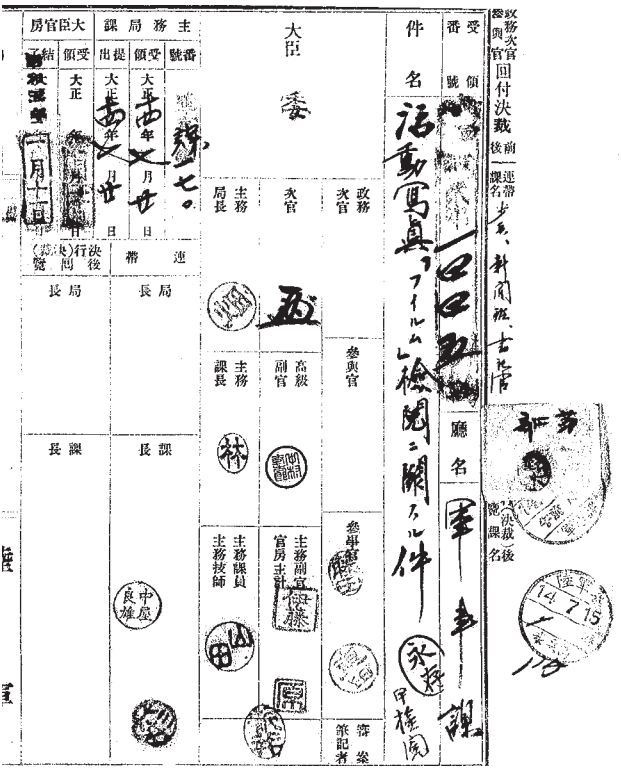


Fig. 1.11. The approval slip for the "Matter of Censorship of Motion Picture Film 1005" contains stamps from some twenty sections in the Home Ministry. The Army Information Office stamp is in the lower right, and the office of the home minister himself is at upper center. (Courtesy Ajia Rekishi Shiryō Sentā)

> disapproved and forbidden in Osaka. In this respect, it is completely different from film censorship. I have absolutely no idea why a play is judged good or bad in this or that city.[93]

Hardly anyone dared oppose censorship in principle, but artists and writers carped about the manner in which theater censorship was administered.

The Kansai kabuki star Nakamura Ganjirō II describes in his autobiography how a local censor in Kyushu forbad the erotic love suicide play *The Sake Shop,* which the Tokyo censor had passed. A performance in Kyushu was permitted only after the play's ending was changed so that the lovers Sankatsu and Hanshichi remained alive. Another time, police stopped Ganjirō while performing a scene that had been approved by the Osaka censor:

> At the Naniwa-za in Osaka, March 1928, I opened in a new play by Oka Onitarō, *Notorious Tōnan*. Kataoka Nizaemon XII and I, playing lovers, had just changed into sleeping kimonos and laid out bedding to begin

Fig. 1.12. Vertical lines in a 1936 edition of *Narukami the Thundergod* indicate salacious words and phrases deleted by the Special Higher Police censor. The illustration is of Ichikawa Danjūrō IV and Onoe Kikugorō I in the 1770s. Modern editions often keep these cuts without identifying them. (From Kawatake Shigetashi, ed., *Kabuki meisakushū, ge*)

> our love scene. . . . At that moment, a policeman in his special front row seat called out, "Curtain, curtain! Close the curtain!" Shocked and dazed, I whispered, "It's a good thing I haven't learned my lines yet." Backstage was pandemonium. Frantically the company playwrights leafed through the script, saying, "This has to go! Cut that passage!" and they inked out dialogue and stage directions. The next day we took the revised script to the police station, received approval, and continued the run. I believe we paid a fine for disturbing public morals.[94]

Censors' strict suppression of immorality was of particular concern to actors and producers of kabuki. After all kabuki together with the licensed prostitute quarters were society's two "evil places" (*aku basho*). Both occupations were legal but suspect nonetheless. There is a certain symmetry to police actions toward kabuki and prostitution. When the text of *Narukami the Thundergod* was published in 1936 in a "collection of famous kabuki plays," censors made thirteen deletions of dialogue and stage directions where Lady Taema lures Priest Narukami to feel her breasts and abdomen.[95] The play had been performed for more than two centuries, but the guardians of wartime morality rejected "traditional" kabuki lasciviousness (Fig. 1.12).

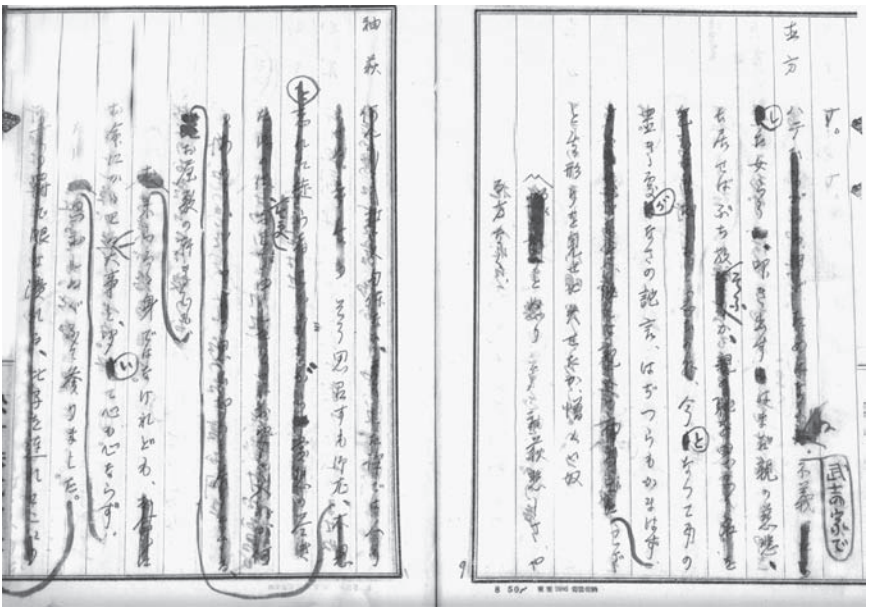


Fig. 1.13. An undated performance script of the traditional kabuki play *Revenge on Ōshū Plain* (act 3, page 9, double leafs) shows extensive deletions and alterations made by producers and actors for reasons of time and convenience, not connected to police censorship. (Courtesy Shōchiku Ōtani Library)

In 1938, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police moved to "reform the geisha profession" and "return geisha to the right path" by "deleting" those women who were doubling as prostitutes. Henceforth, a geisha, literally "artistic person," would have to demonstrate her skill in *shamisen* music and kabuki-style dance (*Nihon buyō*) in order to receive a license to perform.[96] Since prostitution was legal, the regulation was an attempt to shore up the slippery moral boundary between women who "sell artistry" and women who sell their flesh. Similarly, kabuki actors playing certain roles could be said to abandon artistry in order to sell their flesh to spectator voyeurs. As the war situation unraveled, police surveillance of kabuki became more stringent. In the chapters that follow, we will see that censors developed complex rationales for suppressing performances and that the scope of undesirable content expanded.

Not all changes in kabuki performance texts resulted from censorship or government pressure. When Nakamura Ganjirō II joked that he didn't mind police stopping his performance in a new play because "I haven't learned my lines yet," he was expressing a casual attitude toward script changes shared by most kabuki actors. It was common to alter even well-known traditional scripts to suit a particular cast or to meet time constraints. *Kumagai's Battle*

Camp is one of the most often performed plays in the traditional repertory, yet a contemporary performance script in the Shōchiku Ōtani Library has crossed-out lines and inserted dialogue on fifty-five out of fifty-six pages. In the same library, a rehearsal script of the traditional play *Revenge on Ōshū Plain* shows crossed-out stage directions and rewritten lines on page after page of the text.[97] None of these cuts, additions, and alterations were ordered by the police censor (Fig. 1.13).

Kabuki Ascendant

In the early years of Japan's war in Asia, kabuki was one of the government's favored theater forms. Its traditional plays encouraged loyalty to authority and a flood of new war plays, written and staged as part of normal kabuki programs, placed before the public stirring images of Japanese military victories in Manchuria and China. Almost without exception, new kabuki war plays dramatized exploits of real-life Japanese soldiers, marines, and pilots already known to the public through newspaper and magazine stories. There is a ponderous severity to kabuki performance that matched the grave mood of wartime. At the same time, kabuki benefited from an intense emotional outpouring that imperial victories on the mainland generated among the public. Coming at a time of deep economic depression, war plays gave ordinary people something to cheer about. It was but a short step from national confidence to a spirit of aggressive patriotism, urged on by incessant government propaganda. Overall, kabuki's dramas, old and new, proved to be excellent companions to the emerging military state of the early 1930s.

CHAPTER TWO

Kabuki and the Manchurian and Shanghai Incidents | 1931–1934

Vengeance now! Slaughter every enemy soldier!
—*General Offensive against Daijōchin,* kabuki play, 1932

Though the three heroes will soon die, they are joyful to be a suicide squad. —*Three Honored and Heroic Human Bombs*, *bunraku* play, 1932

This is not the end but the beginning of our battle!
—*Now the Battle Begins*, kabuki play, 1933

As we have seen, a number of *ichiyazuke* plays in kabuki dealt with contemporary social and political events in the decade leading up to 1931. And even further back, during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese conflicts, new war plays sprang up like grass after the rain. In 1931, kabuki's fortunes were firmly tied to the national military adventure that was just beginning on the Chinese mainland. Japan's Fifteen-Year War (1931–1945) began September 18, 1931, when extremist officers of the Kwantung Army deliberately blew up a small section of the South Manchurian Railway, blaming the action on "lawless Chinese soldiers." On September 27, Tokyo assured the world that "Japan has no territorial designs on China and merely has taken necessary protective measures." Immediately, however, the Kwantung Army initiated a rapid advance inland from their coastal bases, citing the fictitious "Chinese attack" as its excuse. Although the significance of the conflict was masked in Japan by calling the new war the "Manchurian Incident," within ten days, Japan's intention of ruling Manchuria was widely publicized.[1] In half a year, the Kwantung Army had overrun all of Manchuria, separated the area from China, and in February 1932 selected Pu Yi (Puyi), the last Manchu emperor of China, to be puppet emperor of an "independent Manchukuo Nation." The League of Nations voted to demand that Japan evacuate Manchuria, which Japan refused to do. In the United States (which was not a member of the League), the administration of President Herbert Hoover

refused diplomatic recognition to a separate Manchurian state. Secretary of State Henry L. Stimson informed Japan that the American government would not recognize any change in the status quo that impaired United States treaty rights with China (the Stimson Doctrine). The American and Japanese positions on Manchuria proved irreconcilable, leading to deteriorating relations and, within ten years, war between the two countries.

Japan's clear-cut political and military success in Manchuria stimulated kabuki producers and playwrights to bring overnight pickle plays to the stage one after the other in 1931 and 1932. Fittingly the first such play was titled *The Manchurian Incident*. Written by professional kabuki playwright Matsui Shōō, the new script was staged by Ichikawa Ennosuke II's troupe at the Tōkyō Gekijō in December 1931. Advertisements called it a "Young Stars' Popular Program Recommended by the Army Ministry."[2] A brief commentary on the play published in *Engei gahō* adhered to the government's position that China initiated the Manchurian conflict and that Japan was blameless: "It was announced on August 17, 1931, that in the latter part of July, Chinese army troops butchered special infantry staff officer Nakamura Shintarō and men under his command who were traveling in Mongolia. Further, on September 18, Chinese soldiers blew up a section of our nation's Manchurian Railway. Thus, the Manchurian Incident burst forth."[3] Act 1 takes up the killing of Captain Nakamura by Chinese "bandits" and the defensive movements of Japanese troops into Manchuria taken to "protect the honor of Japan." Act 3 is set in Geneva at the League of Nations, October 24, 1931, where Japanese delegate Fujisawa is defending his nation against the motion that "Japan shall evacuate from Manchuria by November 16, 1931." Matsui closely follows the debate transcript here, and he has written the speeches of chair Aristide Briand, Lord Cecil of Great Britain, and other European delegates in English. In the play's closing "Geneva Thirteen-to-One" scene, Briand calls the motion to a vote:

BRIAND: I shall call each member by name and request his reply. First the British representative.
LORD CECIL: For.
BRIAND: Then the Japanese representative.
AMBASSADOR FUJISAWA: Opposed!
BRIAND: Then the Polish representative.
POLISH REPRESENTATIVE: For.

The motion is passed, Japan outvoted thirteen to one. The play closes with a long, impassioned assertion by Fujisawa that Japan's expansion into Manchuria is both moral and necessary.[4] Ennosuke demonstrated his versatility as

Fig. 2.1. In *Gilt Button Soldier,* set during the Russo-Japanese War, 1904, Reserve Sergeant Tatara (Ichikawa Ennosuke II, center) dies in the arms of his commander, Lieutenant Murase (Sawamura Tosshi VIII, right), while two comrades tend him. Shin Kabuki-za, January 1932. (Author's collection)

an actor in typical kabuki fashion by playing Captain Nakamura in act 1 and Ambassador Fujisawa in act 3.

In the next four months, Ennosuke's kabuki troupe staged two more new plays stimulated by the Manchurian Incident. At the Shin Kabuki-za in the Shinjuku district of Tokyo in January 1932, he starred in *Gilt Button Soldier* (Fig. 2.1). Set during the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, its battlefield heroics were intended to arouse sympathy for the current war. Ennosuke played an artillery reservist, a "gilt button soldier," stationed at an unimportant post, who desperately wants to serve in the regular army. At last he is mobilized and sent to the front. Fired up by his status as a regular soldier, he bravely fights the enemy, is wounded, and dies in his comrade's arms (a stereotypical plot that will be repeated many times in later war plays).[5]

In April Ennosuke played a local Tenshin (Tianjin) area farmer in *The Manchurian Nation* at the Naka-za in Osaka. It was the first production in the Kansai region of an overnight pickle play set in Manchuria. The audience was informed that *The Manchurian Nation* helped strengthen the Manchurian state

and "contributed to establishing peace in the East." Actors asked the audience to join them in "celebrating the birth of a new China" as a result of Japan's efforts in Manchuria.[6] Also that April, at the Kabuki-za in Tokyo, *Festival of the Founding of the Manchurian Nation* provided a showcase for a score of kabuki dancers to present regional Japanese folk dances in honor of the new nation.[7] The flags of five colors mentioned in dance lyrics represent the racial harmony (*minzoku kyōwa*) of the peoples of Manchuria, China, Mongolia, Korea, and Japan who live peacefully side by side in the new Manchurian state:[8]

> Under street eaves fly five-colored flags.
> Ah, banners of the newly founded nation
> That rises prosperous,
> Rises confident.[9]

In addition to these new plays, the pacification and settlement of Manchuria provided dramatic material for five other kabuki overnight pickle plays staged in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto in 1931 and 1932.

Shanghai Incident Plays

In January 1932, the war in China expanded greatly. Units of the Japanese Imperial Navy and Marines launched attacks against Shanghai and surrounding areas in the aftermath of riots Japanese intelligence agents had fomented. This was the beginning of the so-called Shanghai Incident.[10] Throughout February, military information officers inundated newspapers with hundreds of "beautiful stories" of the war. Military photographs showed Japanese troops marching through destroyed sections of Shanghai, dead bodies piled into trucks, marines firing on resisting Chinese, warships and artillery bombarding the city, tanks rumbling in the streets, and displays of confiscated "bandit" arms and munitions.[11] Within weeks, younger kabuki players at the Asakusa Shōchiku-za were giving rousing performances of two hot-off-the-press play scripts that directly dramatized these exciting events. Bandō Mitsugorō VIII, Nakamura Matagorō II, Nakamura Kanzaburō XVII, and Ichikawa Chūsha VIII, who were all in their twenties and thirties, romped through Matsui Shōō's *The Manchurian Incident: An Episode* and *On to Shanghai! On to Shanghai!* Newspaper ads were not modest in touting the virtues of the imperial forces (and the productions): "Imperial Army of Boundless Energy! Righteous and Without Peer! Japanese Spirit of Shining Brilliance in the Carnage of the Shanghai Incident Battleground!" In the ads tanks rumbled through the streets, massed

Fig. 2.2. Sawamura Tosshi VIII wears a vaguely sinister leather coat as a Japanese secret agent in *Special Agent Kayano.* Momentarily cornered by Chinese irregulars and militia, he soon makes his escape. Shin Kabuki-za, April 1932. (Author's collection)

troops marched, and airplanes streaked overhead. These battle images were framed by a line of bullets.[12]

Performing at the Shin Kabuki-za that April, kabuki actors from the Kansai region reaped high praise for their emotional portrayal of courageous soldiers in Noda Takago's *Special Agent Kayano,* subtitled *A Hot-Blooded Youth from Manchuria and Mongolia* (Fig. 2.2). The story of a secret agent who recklessly braves enemy fire to deliver an all-important secret message was based on a widely publicized incident in the China fighting.[13] Sawamura Tosshi VIII was widely praised for his dynamic performance as the intrepid Agent Kayano (see Fig. 11.6). Other kabuki plays, based on reports of fighting around Shanghai, were staged as well.

As one would expect in this early period of the war, the typical kabuki play set in China was glowingly optimistic, following the spin of official government information policy. Typical is a newspaper ad for *General Offensive against Daijōchin* (Fig. 2.3), a new play staged at the Tōkyō Gekijō in March 1932 and featuring Ichikawa Ennosuke II as Regimental Commander Hayashi, supported by Ichikawa Danshirō III, Ichikawa Jukai III, Sawamura Sōjūrō VII, and, as Brigade Commander Maebara, one of kabuki's great stars, Matsumoto Kōshirō VII.[14] The play eulogizes the brave, selfless leadership of Commander Hayashi and is more somber in mood than the ad suggests. Hayashi receives

Fig. 2.3. *General Offensive against Daijōchin,* written and directed by Matsui Shōō and starring Matsumoto Kōshirō VII, was a "special added production" inserted into the Tōkyō Gekijō's program on the tenth day of the March 1932 run. It is early in the war. Mouth agape and dancing with energy, Regimental Commander Hayashi rouses his soldiers: "Honor our brigade commander! Vengeance now! Slaughter every enemy soldier!" (From *Asahi shinbun,* March 11, 1932)

a mortal wound while leading his unit in a successful assault on the strongly fortified area of Daijōchin (Dachangzhen). In the final scene, he "dies calmly beneath the battle-scarred regimental flag," which was a direct gift of His Majesty the Emperor.[15] Accounts of Captain Hayashi's heroic death appeared in the newspapers of March 7, and *General Offensive against Daijōchin* opened as "a special added attraction," on March 11.[16] The play, written and rehearsed in four days, was a true overnight pickle.

These early war plays that featured a hero's sacrificial death in battle illustrated the ethical ideal that was taught in primary school to every Japanese child that a citizen could gain no greater honor than to die for the emperor and to defend the system of imperial rule (*kokutai*, usually translated "national polity"). The plays were ideologically spotless. Of course some Japanese soldiers did not meet this ideal; reports from the China front implied that there were cases of disloyalty and cowardice.[17] But kabuki war plays did not concern themselves with stories of disgraced soldiers.

In the midst of mounting war fever, Shōchiku producers brought to the Kabuki-za stage premieres of seven new military and war plays in 1932. Two new plays dramatized the China war: *Three Heroic Human Bombs* (discussed below) and the bright dance-drama *Festival of the Founding of the Manchurian Nation*, mentioned before. Five "new-history plays" glorified the virtues of powerful warriors from Japan's glorious past, including *Takeda Shingen, The Death of Yoritomo*, and *Departing for the Front: A Picture Scroll*—about Toyotomi Hideyoshi's invasion of Korea in the sixteenth century—and a popular biographical drama of the extraordinary swordsmen of the Tokugawa era, *Kunisada Chūji.* The fifth history play, *Yoshinaka of Kiso*, by a neophyte writer, Nakano Minoru, was chosen out of six hundred entries to receive first prize in a Shōchiku-sponsored kabuki playwriting contest.[18] None of the newly written plays could be faulted on ideological grounds, but the important critic Komiya Toyotaka peevishly snipped that *The Death of Yoritomo*, by Mayama Seika, should not be called a kabuki play: "Mayama Seika's *Death of Yoritomo* is a kabuki play only in that kabuki actors play it. Otherwise it is not truly kabuki at all. A kabuki play contains characteristic kabuki conventions. But in this work, the author offers no prospect of finding such kabuki features. . . . In other words, this play does not contribute to kabuki drama, it violates kabuki drama."[19] When is a new kabuki play not really a kabuki play? That issue became significant in the postwar period, but during the war it did not excite critics.[20] The government wanted new plays that would rouse support for the war, by whatever name they might be called.

Three Heroic Human Bombs

Two newsworthy events in the fighting in China in early 1932 became the basis for a number of extremely popular overnight pickle plays. In the last week of February, Japanese newspapers published front-page stories about First Class Privates Kitagawa Jō, Eshita Takeji, and Sakue Inosuke, who sacrificed themselves by "dashing forward" against a Chinese fortification with explosives strapped to their bodies. Crying, "Long live the emperor, long live the Japanese Empire," they blasted a thirty-foot gap in the fortifications, allowing other units to storm and take the Chinese garrison.[21] They were immediately proclaimed national heroes and nicknamed the "Three Heroic Human Bombs" (*nikudan sanyūshi* or *bakudan sanyūshi*). The empress praised them for their self-sacrifice. Thus began one of the most heralded *bidan*, or beautiful tales, of the war.[22]

Within weeks of their deaths, the three suicide bombers, as we would call

them today, became the subject of half a dozen overnight pickle theater productions. Three of the productions were kabuki. Here we have a fascinating example of how kabuki producers, playwrights, and actors were all enmeshed in the structure of a wartime society that was feeding ravenously on battlefront news reports. Kabuki plays about the three heroes reflected public knowledge, such as it was, of wartime events. And, as we will see, kabuki was participating in the creation of a myth.

What were these three productions? First, Matsui's *Three Heroic Human Bombs* opened at the Kabuki-za in Tokyo on March 6. It had been dashed off in just two weeks' time. The all-star production featured three idols of the kabuki stage, Ichimura Uzaemon XV, Onoe Kikugorō VI, and Kikugorō's brother, Bandō Hikosaburō VI, as the three heroes. Because Matsui's script became a model for later war plays, I include here a translation of a detailed synopsis published in *Engei gahō.* It is typical of kabuki to conflate the actor and the role; in this case it suggests that the actors themselves are soldiers.

> Act 1: Somewhere on the front lines in China. Sappers' tubes for high explosives lean against piles of sandbags. A dozen soldiers rest. One calibrates enemy positions with binoculars, noting fire points: "so many meters to the left," "so many meters to the right." An order is called down: "First suicide squad (*kesshitai*) advance." Two suicide units rise and pray together for success. They energetically rush off left, calling out: "Don't worry. We'll do it." Sounds of artillery explosions and rifle fire. At last the order arrives: "All suicide squads, destroy the enemy fifty meters ahead." Hikosaburō's Private Kitagawa and Kikugorō's Private Eshita wake Uzaemon's dozing Private Sakue, who yawns and calmly asks, "Is it time to go?" As one, the three heroes lift a long tube of high explosives and briskly carry it off stage left. The remaining soldiers pray for their success.
>
> Act 2: The front lines: a maze of thick barbed wire entanglements. Loud explosions, rifle fire, tracers light the darkening sky. From the back of the theater auditorium, the three heroes rush on carrying a sappers' tube. They stop and then warily creep forward to examine the barbed wire on the main stage. In a whisper, Sakue asks Eshita what they should do now. Without pausing to reply, Eshita signals with a look and instantly lights the fuse. The three leap up and cry out, "Long live the empire! Long live the emperor!" Eyes fixed on the barbed wire, they rush forward. Blackout. A few moments later the sound of a tremendous explosion. Many soldiers rush out of the seats and aisles of the auditorium and disappear onstage into the darkness. Artillery shells from both sides explode in the air. A

moment later, a great shout of "Banzai!" rises from the stage. Continued darkness. Then the stage brightens. A lone sentry holds a rising sun flag that flutters in the breeze. Sound of an airplane propeller. The sentry looks into the sky and weeps. The sun rises higher. A bright, glorious day.

Act 3: Ruins of a house near the front. Mortuary tablets of the three heroes are displayed before the ruins of a shelled house. Comrades offer incense, beginning with the brigade commander. Stage left, a waving national flag. Soldiers place the heroes' favorite foods in front of funeral tablets that Kikugorō as Lt. Higashijima has written.[23] Comrades bring forth a blood-soaked handkerchief from the rucksack of one of the heroes. Uzaemon's Brigade Commander Shimomoto and Hikosaburō's Major Miyawaki enter and, in the gathering darkness, make heartfelt funeral offerings. Lt. Higashijima turns to the mortuary tablets and commends the three heroes' meritorious deed while weeping unabashedly: "The wise and heroic act that you soldiers have accomplished will be heard by His Majesty himself." Lt. Higashijima weeps. Officers and men lower their heads in solemn, silent respect. The trumpet sounds a mournful melody. The order is heard, "Present arms!" and all come to attention. Modestly, softly, with deliberation, the soldiers conduct a memorial service.[24]

When Uzaemon, Kikugorō, and Hikosaburō wore the mundane army uniforms of Japanese enlisted men, the three actors were effacing themselves; they were eschewing magnificent traditional kabuki costumes in order to be contemporary (see the illustration at the beginning of Part 1). But offstage they ostentatiously linked themselves to the national heroes. Kikugorō, Uzaemon, and Ōtani Takejirō, president of the Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation, sponsored a public memorial service for the three heroes for which they purchased an eye-catching newspaper advertisement.[25] The memorial service made a good photo opportunity. One published photograph shows the three actors bowing before black-draped memorial pictures of Privates Kitagawa, Eshita, and Sakue, the deceased soldiers whose roles they were playing at the Kabuki-za that afternoon (Fig. 2.4a). Another shows the three actors and President Ōtani shamelessly publicizing themselves at the expense of the baffled, grief-stricken families who were invited to attend the memorial service (Fig. 2.4b). Publicists used the event to position kabuki as a sympathetic supporter of the war. And it was good business for Shōchiku to be on the right side of government policy.

Shōchiku publicists went all out to draw audiences to the Kabuki-za production. A large ad in the *Asahi* newspaper shows the three heroes rushing exuber-

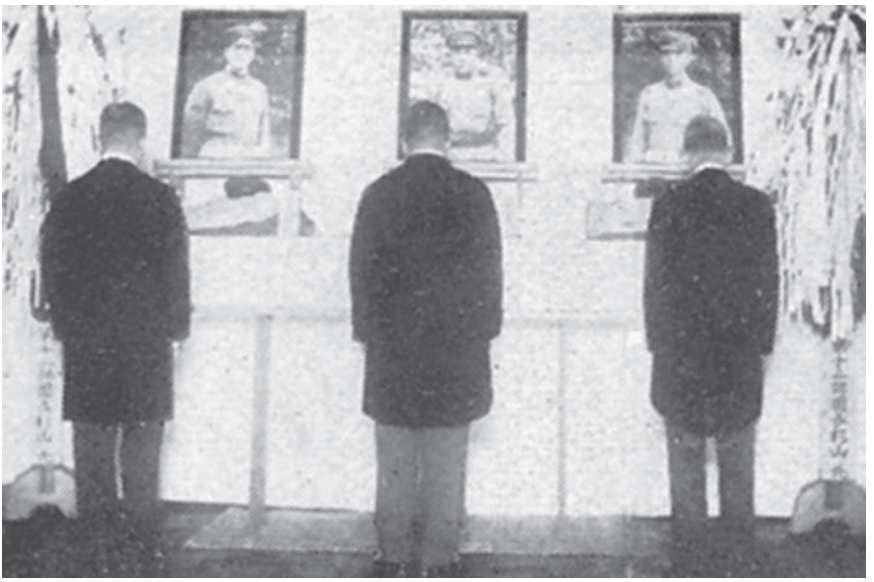


Fig. 2.4a. A public memorial service for the Three Heroic Human Bombs, Aoyama Mortuary, March 1932. Onoe Kikugorō VI, Bandō Hikosaburō VI, and Ichimura Uzaemon XV (left to right) stand reverently before photographs of Privates Enshita, Kitagawa, and Sakue, thus identifying themselves with the martyrs they would play a few hours later on the Kabuki-za stage. (From *Engei gahō*, April 1932)

Fig. 2.4b. At the memorial service for the Three Heroic Human Bombs, Bandō Hikosaburō VI, Ichimura Uzaemon XV, Onoe Kikugorō VI, and Shōchiku president Ōtani Takejirō (left to right) shamelessly publicize themselves with the three grieving mothers. The kabuki dignitaries, in formal dress and wearing badges of authority, are clearly in charge. (From *Engei gahō*, April 1932)

Fig. 2.5. A newspaper ad for *Three Heroic Human Bombs*, Kabuki-za, March 1932, shows three heroes enthusiastically charging (*maishin*) Chinese barbed wire defenses, each with a lighted bomb on his back. (From *Asahi shinbun* March 3, 1932)

antly into the barbed wire entanglements while smoke curls up from lighted fuses of soon-to-explode bombs tied to their backs (Fig. 2.5). It is a happy image. Two of the men appear to be smiling.[26] Shōchiku translators provided an innocuous English play title, *The Three Brave Soldiers*, in its ad in the *Japan Times & Mail.* The ad informed foreign readers: "The world has never seen such wonderful soldiers. Here is the traditional spirit of the Japanese Bushidō."[27]

A second kabuki production, *Three Heroes*, was sandwiched into the regular March program at the Shin Kabuki-za in Tokyo. Starring Osaka actor Kataoka Nizaemon XIII as Eshita, Nakamura Shikaku II as Kitagawa, and Bandō Mitsugorō VIII as Sakue, the play was rushed on stage, opening March 7, one day after the performance at the Kabuki-za.[28] A reviewer had little to say about the play but remarked almost as an aside that, although he liked the explosive sound effects, the acting was paltry, one actor laughed strangely, and another didn't know how to hold a cigarette.[29] A third kabuki production, titled *Shanghai's Three Heroes*, was staged by the Kansai Grand Kabuki Troupe at

Fig. 2.6. The Kansai Grand Kabuki Troupe's *Shanghai's Three Heroes* at the Shōchiku Gekijō in Kobe, March 1932. Kansai actors Jitsukawa Enjaku II, Nakamura Kaisha I, and Hayashi Chōsaburō realistically crawl on the ground, sharing the weight of a long torpedo bomb. (From *Engei gahō*, May 1932)

the Misono-za in Nagoya, beginning March 18 (Fig. 2.6). Jitsukawa Enjaku II, Nakamura Kaisha I, and Hayashi Chōsaburō played the three sappers, while Nakamura Ganjirō II was unit commander Ueda. The troupe then took the production to Kobe's Shōchiku Gekijō for a week's run, March 24–30.[30]

In a coincidence laced with irony, members of the Litton Commission from the League of Nations arrived in Tokyo on February 26, the day Japanese newspaper headlines screamed their adulation for the three suicide bombers who had won the day near Shanghai. It was part of the public relations routine that distinguished foreign guests would be taken to see Grand Kabuki at the Kabuki-za, Tokyo's premier theater. But inasmuch as the commission had come to investigate Japan's incursion into Manchuria, it would hardly do for commission members to see Kikugorō and company blow up a Chinese army position before they began their work. So, on March 4, Japanese hosts guided their foreign guests to the smaller Tōkyō Gekijō, where they were treated to a colorful and innocuous kabuki dance-comedy, *Trousers for Two*.[31] The press noted that the distinguished foreign guests could not tell if female roles were played by *onnagata* or actresses. The Europeans approved of the Western stage settings and enjoyed the welcoming shouts of "banzai" from the audience. It was a close call.

Three Glorious Human Bombs in Other Media

The story of the three heroes saturated all of the media. Three *shinpa* companies added human bomb plays to their programs in March, as did *shingeki* and popular troupes.[32] But if three heroes, why not more? Newspapers published photographs on March 2 of "Five Heroic Human Bombs" who blew themselves up "for the same purpose."[33] Topping this, the swashbuckling New National Drama Troupe (Shinkokugeki Gekidan) opened *Eight Heroic Human Bombs* on a double bill with *Shanghai* that pitted honest Japanese civilians against "lawless" Chinese gangsters. After a month's run at the Shinbashi Enbujō, the New National Drama Troupe's irreproachably patriotic pair of plays traveled to the Misono-za in Nagoya for a brief run.[34]

Matsui's kabuki script was also adapted by the *bunraku* puppet troupe of Osaka. In April, carvers fashioned puppet figures of soldiers, and in the summer the troupe performed *Three Honored and Heroic Human Bombs* in Kyoto, Tokyo, Kobe, and other cities. Audiences appeared to be deeply moved.[35] Chanted narrative described the soldiers in these words: "Though the three heroes will soon die, they are joyful to be a suicide squad" for the sake of "the emperor and the Greater Japanese Empire." The praiseworthy term "suicide squad" (*kesshitai*) is used seven times to describe the three heroes.[36]

Even so, critic Ishiwari Matsutarō wrote harshly in *Engei gahō* about both the script and its production. According to Ishiwari, *Three Honored and Heroic Human Bombs* is an overnight pickle play about current events that "breaks with tradition" despite Shōchiku's publicity claims to the contrary. The soldier puppets dressed in tight-fitting military uniforms lacked the visual grace of traditional kimono-clad figures. Above all, *bunraku* is a musical theater, and the playwright amateurishly used only rhythmic narrative (*fushi*) and spoken prose dialogue (*kotoba*). Because the playwright (and musicians) ignored *bunraku*'s beautiful singing style (*jiai*), the performance was monotonous and without life. Contrary to those who praised the production for being realistic, the critic "denounces with all his power" the idea that *bunraku* art must be sacrificed to the "lie of reality."[37] In 1932 it was possible for a critic to brush aside a play's strongly patriotic content and stress artistic faults without the government calling him to account.

Among other genres, in the summer the Shōchiku Girls Musical Troupe staged "a heroic revue to tell the world . . . through reverberating song" the exploits of the Three Heroic Human Bombs.[38] The musical was revived in 1940 as a puppet play, with young actresses wearing the black garb of *bunraku*

puppeteers as they moved the soldier puppets to their deaths in *Shining Japan: Three Heroic Human Bombs*.[39]

Motion picture producers and directors were quick to capitalize on the national frenzy for the three heroes. Within a month six studios had turned out quickie films that spliced fictionalized enactments of the three men's deaths with grainy newsreel clips of the fighting in China.[40] These half-baked concoctions were often placed on double bills with war movies like *Great Manchurian Nation.* By the end of March, movie audiences as far away as Hawai'i were able to see *Three Heroic Human Bombs* at their local cinemas. A Hawai'i newspaper ad boasted that the heroic story demonstrated how "the essence of Japan's fighting spirit (*Yamato damashii*) now reverberates throughout the world." Readers were advised that all Japanese living in Hawai'i "should see this film without fail."[41]

And there was more. Winning compositions in a "Three Heroic Human Bomb Song Contest" were extensively publicized in the *Asahi* newspapers and the songs recorded and released by the Columbia Record Company. The Victor Record Company held its own song contest as well.[42] Department stores organized "Three Heroic Human Bomb" exhibitions featuring artifacts of the ongoing China war.[43] And inevitably happy drawings of the three heroes prancing to their deaths showed up in commercial advertising. Images of the three heroes were hand painted and stenciled onto kimonos, especially undergarments worn by young boys (Figs. 2.7a and 2.7b). The heroes were ubiquitous in advertising (Fig. 2.8). One of the most egregiously tasteless ads, by the Kirin Beer Company, replaced the deadly explosive charge with a bottle of Kirin beer.[44]

A front-page article in the daily *Japan Times & Mail* described (and helped to foster) a spirit of adulation for the three heroes:

> [Their] heroism has aroused an unprecedented wave of patriotism among the people in Japan. The heroism of these three soldiers, who volunteered . . . at the cost of their own lives . . . shall be cherished by future generations. The War Office . . . will confer upon them the highest military decorations. The division to which they belong will honor their spirits with a magnificent divisional funeral. Their battalion is planning to erect a bronze statue of the three heroes.[45]

The authorities quickly moved to enshrine the three heroes as Warrior Gods (*gunshin*) as a means of encouraging similar sacrifice by others (Fig. 2.9).

Although the situations are different in many ways, Americans having experienced the events of September 11, 2001, some seventy years after the Shang-

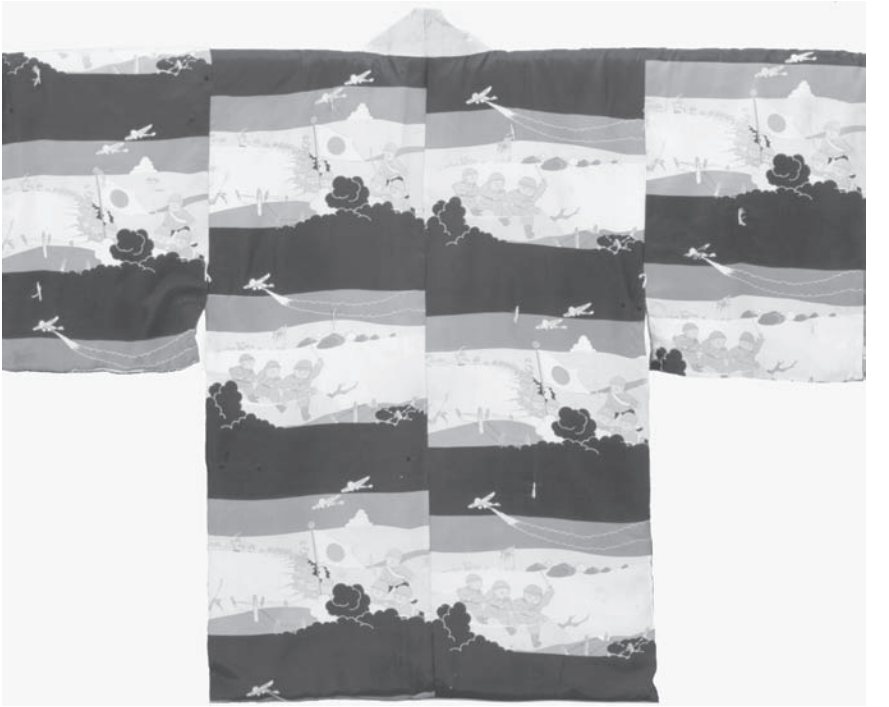


Fig. 2.7a. An innocent Three Heroic Human Bombs stencil-dyed motif is repeated on a boy's silk undergarment (*nagajuban*). Fig. 2.7b, inset. Three cherubic little boys carry a long smoking bomb, leading tiny tanks, an airplane, and happy comrades into a toy-soldier battle. (Collection of Okunishi Michiko and Makoto. Photo courtesy Barr Graduate Center for Studies in the Decorative Arts Design and Culture)

Fig. 2.8. "KIRIN BEER: Attack!! Attack!! Unceasingly, Kirin opens the way." A newspaper advertisement for Kirin beer, substituting a bottle for the bomb, seems to make a joke of the sacrifice made by the three heroes. (From *Asahi shinbun*, April 22, 1932)

hai Incident, may appreciate sentiments of gratitude for heroic self-sacrifice in a time of national danger. Such sentiments and calls to support military action out of patriotic feelings proved irresistible to Japanese in the 1930s, as they do to citizens of most countries in times of war.

In fact, the "event" that galvanized the nation in February 1932 did not occur as mythologized. It was a fabrication, or at least an amalgamation, of several events designed to fan patriotic sentiments on the home front. Twenty years after the war was over, the well-known sociologist Katō Hidetoshi showed that Japanese military intelligence officials had deliberately changed major components of the story. According to military dispatches that Katō examined, nine sappers attached to different units attacked the Chinese fortification several times. The attacks failed and most of the sappers were killed, including the three named heroes, some from withering Chinese rifle fire and some when bombs with short fuses exploded prematurely. In a later attack other Japanese units broke through the barbed wire and captured the position. The story that three friends had successfully sacrificed themselves was concocted by intelligence operative Tanaka Ryūichi to boost home front morale.[46] Ienaga Saburō

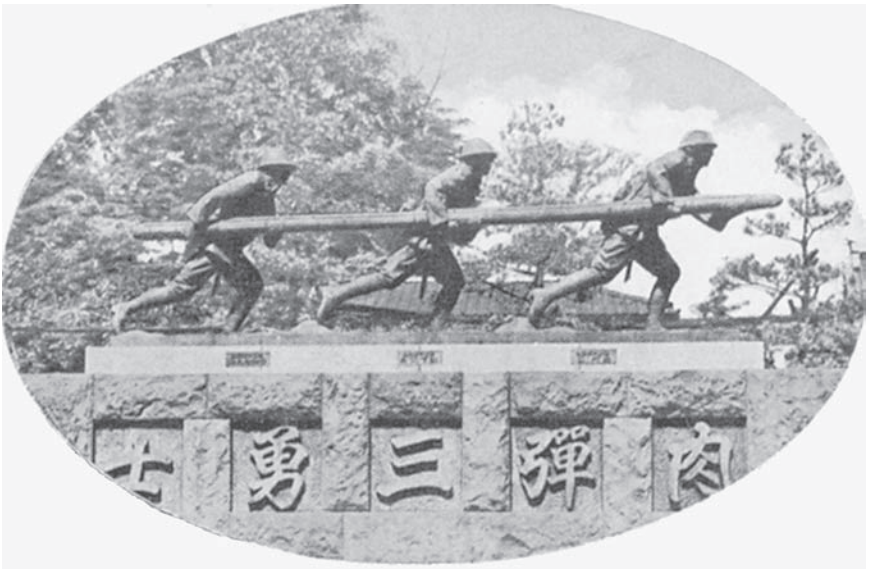


Fig. 2.9. The largest of many memorials to the three human bombs was a bronze statue erected by public subscription at the Seishō Zen Temple in Shiba, Tokyo. In popular imagination, the three heroes stride boldly forward oblivious of withering enemy fire. (Author's collection)

says that this "fabricated story" of three heroes was one of many "the government churned out . . . to drum up enthusiasm" for the war.[47] Further, the term "three heroes" (*sanyūshi*) was in general circulation in February 1932 and had been applied to three other killed soldiers just two weeks previously.[48] Going back farther, in 1903 kabuki actors in Osaka had presented a seven-scene play titled *Three Heroes*. And Mizutani Shikio, noting "three heroes" children's songs in 1924, traces the term to as early as the 1890s.[49] A postwar discussion of the three-heroes phenomenon explains:

> The military and the government intentionally created a beautiful tale of the battlefront (*senba bidan*). It was necessary to aestheticize death and suffuse this deep emotion into the general public in order to lead citizens to accept their own death in battle. Even a gangster or juvenile delinquent was absolved of his crimes if he fought bravely on the battlefield. Lower-class citizens who ordinarily led humdrum lives could perform work of great importance at the front. . . . It was taught, and widely believed, that this was all done "for the sake of the emperor."[50]

Japan's military propagandists were successful in reshaping the raw events of the China war into patterns that the average citizen recognized and found appeal-

Fig. 2.10. Mayama Seika's *Major Kuga*, Meiji-za, November 1932. Major Kuga (Sawamura Tosshi VIII) is severely wounded in battle and about to fall unconscious. The actor's asymmetrical stance, straight forward leg and bent back leg, is typical male kabuki posture. (From *Engei gahō*, December 1932)

ing. Through most of the war years, kabuki playwrights and producers continued to turn out "beautiful tales" of wartime heroism for popular consumption.

Mayama Seika's *Major Kuga*

A second important overnight pickle play, Mayama Seika's *Major Kuga,* followed within a month of the human bomb episode and was also based on a soldier's suicide in China. In late March 1932, a Major Kuga committed suicide to atone for being captured in battle (Fig. 2.10). The officer's bravery and selfless

resolution inspired tremendous media attention. Under the headline "Shanghai Incident: Imperial Army's Tragic Flower," the *Asahi* newspaper printed four stories side by side on April 2, 1932, warmly praising the nobility of Kuga's "voluntary" death. A photograph, certainly provided by the Army Ministry, shows Major Kuga dressed in full uniform standing beside his wife, who wears a severe dark kimono. His somber mood and formal pose seem to presage his coming death.[51] Kuga's deliberate sacrifice of his life inspired Mayama Seika to write, over the summer of 1932, one of the war's most challenging *ichiyazuke*. In November, Mayama's script of *Major Kuga* was produced at the Meiji-za with kabuki actor Sawamura Tosshi VIII playing the leading role.[52] Mayama's play closely follows events as they were reported in the daily press: an idealistic Major Kuga is wounded and captured by Chinese forces during fierce fighting near Shanghai. After receiving excellent treatment from Chinese doctors, he is released and he returns to Japan. But Kuga is painfully aware that "to remain alive after capture by enemy military forces is a cause of deep shame." After searching deeply into his conscience, "he resolves, as a warrior should, to take his own life." He returns to China as a civilian, and on March 28 at the scene of battle he gives up his life: concerned that he cannot make the required "single cut of the belly" with his damaged sword, he kills himself with a pistol shot to the head.

Mayama's drama is sharply set apart from most wartime overnight pickle plays by showing Major Kuga's internal conflict. The difficult question Mayama raises for Major Kuga, and for the audience, is whether Kuga's suicide is required. At issue is the highly unusual circumstance that when Kuga is captured, he is unconscious and therefore he did not "surrender" to the enemy. After deep introspection, Kuga accepts his responsibility, both in life and in the play: he chooses to offer his life because it is the correct moral course.[53]

The First "New-History" Plays

Japan did not win a clear victory in the fierce fighting around Shanghai in 1932. The conflict subsided, but it was deeply troubling to Japanese that somehow the many "victories" proclaimed by government spokesmen had not brought on the collapse of the Chinese Nationalist government as had been predicted. What must Japan do to win the peace? In June 1933, a new kabuki play was produced at the Kabuki-za that offered an answer to that question. The three-act drama was *Itō Hirobumi and Ri Kōshō* by Nakamura Kichizō (Fig. 2.11). Set in 1895 at the conclusion of the earlier Sino-Japanese conflict, the play shows the brilliant Chinese chief minister Ri Kōshō (Li Hongzhang), acted by

Fig. 2.11. *Itō Hirobumi and Ri Kōshō* by Nakamura Kichizō, Kabukiza, June 1933. Set in 1895, at the conclusion of the first Sino-Japanese conflict, Japanese prime minister Itō Hirobumi (Ichikawa Sadanji II, seated) offers "lenient terms" to Chinese minister Ri Kōshō (Li Hongzhang), played by Matsumoto Kōshirō VII (standing). By analogy, the Chinese can end the war in 1933 by accepting Japan's "reasonable terms." (From Nagayama Takeomi, ed., *Kabuki-za hyakunen shi, honbun hen*, 1)

Matsumoto Kōshirō VII, accepting generous and humane peace terms offered by Japanese prime minister Itō Hirobumi, played by Ichikawa Sadanji II.[54] This new-history play is clearly intended to present audiences with a Meiji era analogy to the fighting in China in 1933, and its message is "If the Chinese side is reasonable, the war can end. Since Japan has done nothing wrong, it is up to China to end the war." In the final scene, loyalty to the Meiji emperor assures the successful conclusion of the treaty: Itō quells military hotheads who demand harsher conditions for peace by tapping into the strong mood of deference to the emperor of this early war period. Itō gravely intones: "this treaty will remove unease from the emperor's heart."[55] Against this admonition, opponents can say nothing.

The battles of the Shanghai Incident were seemingly resolved with a negotiated cease-fire on May 5, 1932, but this did not lead to peace among the three contesting sides in China: the Nationalists, the Communist guerrillas, and, on the Japan side, the Kwantung Army in Manchuria and Imperial Army and Navy units in the Shanghai area. The Nationalists turned their attention to

Fig. 2.12. A Manchurian Incident overnight pickle war play, *Now the Battle Begins*, by Mayama Seika, Kabuki-za, May 1933. Settlers in Manchuria Shinnō Naoto (Ichikawa Sadanji II) and his wife Yukie (Bandō Shūchō IV) resolutely protect their son Shigeru (Ichikawa Ennosuke II), who has been wounded by Chinese militia. A sympathetic journalist, Sasaki (Ōtani Tomoemon VI), comforts a badly wounded Shigeru. (From *Engei gahō*, June 1933)

containing Communist forces under the slogan "First unify from within, then resist the enemy from without." The war in China dropped out of newspaper headlines in Japan. Now that Manchuria had been successfully occupied and in the absence of stirring new imperial victories, the Japanese people's interest in the war in China rapidly waned.

Between 1934 and 1937, overnight pickle plays about the war in Manchuria or China were notable by their absence from major kabuki stages, reflecting public indifference. Mayama Seika's *Now the Battle Begins,* at the Kabuki-za in May 1933, was the last *ichiyazuke* war play for four years (Fig. 2.12). As usual, Mayama wrote the main role for Ichikawa Sadanji II. In the 1930s, Shinnō Naoto, a veteran of the Russo-Japanese War, and his wife Yukie had been resettled in Manchuria as peace-loving farmers. They have borne without protest the malicious destruction of their crops by Chinese militia. But when the Chinese police wound their eldest son, Yukie takes up a rifle to defend him and Shinnō attacks with drawn sword, shouting, "This is not the end but the beginning

of our battle!" Audiences were shocked when the Chinese police surrounding Shinnō killed him "like a dog." Veteran socialist Arahata Kanson, invited by the publisher of *Engei gahō* to comment, titled a dismissive review "One Spectator's Dissatisfaction." "While the play is interesting and substantial," Arahata pontificated, "its contents bring to mind many doubts." When Sadanji's peace-loving father suddenly spouts pro-war rhetoric and dashes into battle, Arahata notes, "This may be fine for stirring up citizens' anger" but inconsistent motivation constitutes a "failure" of the playwright's tragic aim.[56]

Mayama Seika wrote no fewer than four new-history plays in 1934, making him the leading figure in the genre. *The Last Day of Ōishi* (Kabuki-za, February), criticized for being long-winded, was the first play that Mayama wrote in his ambitious ten-play cycle *Loyal Retainers of the Genroku Era*. *Admiral Tōgō Heihachirō* (Meiji-za, March) exalted the admiral's noble actions when he defeated the Russian navy in the decisive battle at Tsushima during the Russo-Japanese War. *Lord Kusunoki at Sakurai Station* (Kabuki-za, April) reimagined the famous farewell scene in which Emperor Go-Daigo's chief supporter, Kusunoki Masashige, gives final instructions to his young son, Masayuki, before leaving for battle. Defeated and bloodied with many wounds, Masashige commits seppuku, thus proving his loyalty and devotion to the emperor. The play was staged on the six hundredth anniversary of Masashige's death. In December at the Kabuki-za, Mayama challenged the popular *shin*-kabuki play by Yamamoto Yūzō *Lord Sakazaki of Dewa* by creating his own play with the same title. Critics praised the strong final scene in which Sakazaki kills himself rather than watch his intended bride, Princess Sen, marry a younger and more handsome suitor.[57]

Between 1933 and 1937, ten premieres of new-history plays about former shoguns and generals were staged at the Kabuki-za alone. All together during the fifteen war years playwrights revisited Japan's martial history in some sixty new plays; we can discuss only a few of them here. Loyalty was not necessarily a simple matter in new-history plays. For example, Katō Kiyomasa had been raised by Toyotomi Hideyoshi and in adulthood was Hideyoshi's staunch vassal. Yet when Hideyoshi died, Kiyomasa sided with Tokugawa Ieyasu in the Battle of Sekigahara in 1600 that deposed the Toyotomi family. Kiyomasa was handsomely rewarded for his turncoat behavior: Ieyasu doubled the size of his fief. It was precisely Kiyomasa's divided loyalty that made this warrior's life provocative material for dramatic exploration. Commercial playwright Yoshida Genjirō wrote three kabuki plays about Kiyomasa in 1933 to celebrate the 325th anniversary of the warrior's death. Each explored different facets of his character. All were written for the famously reserved kabuki actor Naka-

mura Kichiemon I. In *Kiyomasa at Nijō Castle* (1933), Kiyomasa calls on the "old badger" Tokugawa Ieyasu at Nijō Castle in Kyoto. In a lengthy conversation with Ieyasu, Kiyomasa offers his fealty to the Tokugawa clan now ruling Japan. Yoshida provides Kiyomasa with an honorable motive: Kiyomasa hopes his action will shield Hideyori, son and heir of Hideyoshi (it does not).[58] A program note explained the play's theme: "Lord Kiyomasa's soul is unsurpassed in genuine loyalty, and Kichiemon, in the role of Kiyomasa, earnestly grapples with the issue [of loyalty]."[59] It was presumed that audiences would mentally transfer to the reigning Shōwa emperor (Hirohito) the powerful feelings of feudal loyalty that were portrayed in the play. Kichiemon made the role his in seven productions between 1933 and 1942.[60]

Kiyomasa at Urusan Castle (1934) depicts Hideyoshi's favorite general at a dark time in the Japanese invasion of Korea in 1597 (Fig. 2.13). A huge Chinese army has surrounded Urusan Castle in Korea and is besieging Kiyomasa and his samurai warriors in their stronghold. Only the fortunate arrival of two other Japanese armies prevents the slaughter of Kiyomasa and his troops. The play ends with Kiyomasa preparing to attack the Chinese and lift the siege. As portrayed by Yoshida, the hero of the fighting at Urusan is Kiyomasa and not his rescuers. Pragmatic rather than ideological, Kiyomasa does not rally his men with pledges of loyalty to the emperor. He comforts them with the promise that if they die in the coming battle, their bodies will receive a proper Buddhist burial: "It is truly said: a samurai's greatest desire is that his corpse should lie on the battlefield, covered by grass. But how heartless if my fallen retainers' corpses become merely food for the birds and animals. So, if by chance this Kiyomasa dies in battle here at Urusan Castle, it is my wish that Monk Shōun give our corpses proper burial."[61] An observer of the production sniffed that audiences seemed more interested in the ferociously exploding shells, smoke, and fire of simulated battle than in dramatic values.[62] Finally, Yoshida wrote *Kiyomasa at Kumamoto Castle* in 1936, and Kichiemon performed the role at the Meiji-za that year. In Nakamura Tetsurō's opinion, Yoshida was unmatched in his skill in reaching a broad popular kabuki audience in these and other new-history plays. Yoshida wrote emotionally affecting scenes without resorting to cheap theatrics or sentimentalism.[63]

Moon Castle, written by Imamura Shin'ichirō, was an unusually direct, perhaps naïve, depiction of contrasting patterns of life during the abrupt transition from Tokugawa feudalism to Meiji modernism in the 1870s. Briefly, Imamura set polar opposites against each other. Clan lord Sadaharu (Ichikawa Ennosuke II) takes no heed of the present but irresponsibly continues an idle life with his mistress, Tatsue, indulging in effete poetry composition and moon

Fig. 2.13. Nakamura Kichiemon I as General Katō Kiyomasa in *Kiyomasa at Urusan Castle*, Tōkyō Gekijō, October 1933. Dressed in warrior's regalia, Kiyomasa commands the spearhead of Toyotomi Hideyoshi's armies during the Japanese invasion of Korea, 1597. (From *Engei gahō*, November 1943)

viewing. Sadaharu's chief retainer Bunnojō (Ichikawa Sadanji II) rebukes his master, urging him to play a role in the new Meiji society. Bunnojō flaunts his modernity (or Westernization). Wearing a macintosh and bowler hat, he plays a violin on the castle ramparts (Fig. 2.14). A resolution to the conflict is suggested when Tatsue announces her intention to go to Tokyo. She, and perhaps Sadaharu, will join the new Meiji world.[64]

It can be said of virtually all new-history plays that authors were not seeking historical truth as much as they were striving to create archetypes of brave, loyal, and spiritually pure behavior. Heroes, and sometimes heroines, were portrayed laying down their lives for emperor and nation. Nor did it matter that Japanese history was replete with cases where samurai vassals went over to the other side and betrayed their masters (Akechi Mitsuhide, who murdered his lord, Oda Nobunaga, immediately comes to mind as does traitorous Kiyomasa). Playwrights ignored inconvenient historical examples of human treachery in order to provide uplifting models of loyalty that would inspire 1930s audiences.

Fig. 2.14. *Moon Castle*, by Imamura Shinichirō, visually manifests the conflict between "old" and "new" in Meiji society. Chief clan retainer Bunnojō (Ichikawa Sadanji II), wearing Western cloak and bowler and carrying a violin, infuriates two traditional retainers who are dressed in kimono, vest, and culottes, and carry the samurai's two swords. (From *Engei gahō*, December 1936)

Censorship and Suppression of Modern Drama

Japan's conflict was ostensibly with China, but Western merchants, diplomats, and military forces were physically entrenched in the Chinese treaty ports in extraterritorial enclaves. Gunboats from Britain and America plied Chinese rivers carrying contingents of marines. The two democracies favored China in its conflict with Japan in the 1930s. In time Japanese governments would feel it necessary to confront Western military and political power. But ten years before Japan challenged Europe and America militarily, successive prime ministers and their cabinets tested the waters with criticism of decadent Western

cultural values. Censorship was one way to uproot undesirable foreign ideas and prevent their public expression. In 1931–1934, police focused their attention on radical-left political activity based on Western thought that was considered dangerous to the state. Later in the war, the campaign against foreign culture would become more virulent.

In Japanese theater, Western artistic and ideological influence was strongest in the modern theater movement. In particular, proletarian *shingeki* troupes, espousing socialist or communist ideals of political egalitarianism and economic equality, were major targets of police censorship and suppression. Proletarian theater began in 1926, when the Trunk Theater (Toranku Gekijō) began to perform agitprop (agitation-propaganda) theater pieces. In 1931, thirteen leftist troupes joined to form the Japan League of Proletarian Theaters (Puroto), taking its place alongside proletarian leagues of cinema, art, literature, and music within the Japan Proletarian Cultural Federation (KOPF). This made radical theater the strongest and most dynamic wing in *shingeki*.[65] In line with leftist ideology that art should be for the common people, Puroto troupes brought populist, pro-labor, anticapitalist plays to villagers and factory and mine workers.[66] Proletarian theater leader Murayama Tomoyoshi has described how police raised countless objections aimed at stifling proletarian theater tours. Some town policemen stopped performances every night with a new objection: a scene was too dark, a line of dialogue was offensive, music was too loud, an actress' costume was suggestive.[67] A provincial police censor cut a scene of a burning house on the grounds that red (associated with communism) was a "forbidden color" on stage.[68]

In one of the earliest concerted efforts to suppress Puroto, in 1932 the police "absolutely forbad" half a dozen productions that were to participate in a Comintern-organized International Theater Day on February 13.[69] In Osaka censors did not permit the regicide and assassinations in *Hamlet* to be staged, saying the scenes encouraged rebellion against the state.[70] From Murayama's ideological perspective on the far left, he must have abhorred the rightist censorship of play scripts. But, in writing about censorship, he refrained from calling for its end. He asked only that the operation of censorship be consistent: "I hope that a unified, national system of script censorship will prevent such anomalies in the future." Murayama had to bear inconsistent, and malicious, police censorship for ten more years, until his arrest in 1940.

Police arbitrarily censored play scripts of all theater genres throughout the war (until that power was abolished by American Occupation authorities in October 1945). Japanese censors examined play scripts and performances to root out undesirable political or social ideas (*shisō*) and behavior that con-

travened customary morality (*fūzoku*). This censorship was unpleasant and annoying but usually not a life-or-death matter for playwrights or directors. In addition, the Special Higher Police wielded a second, and more powerful, weapon against leftist artists. The Peace Preservation Law, enacted by the Diet in 1925, authorized police to arrest any person who "advocates altering the imperial state (*kokutai*) or political system, or who repudiates the system of private property."[71] Using this law, between March 1928 and April 1929, police rounded up 8,368 university students, writers, and intellectuals not for illegal actions, but for holding illegal thoughts. They were accused of so-called thought crimes (*shisō han*) punishable by jail terms or execution. Trials and convictions continued through 1931.[72] The gentle image of a "people's police" that the Home Ministry had originally cultivated for the Special Higher Police was now replaced by the stern image of an "emperor's police" carrying out the imperial will.[73]

In 1932, police embarked on a campaign to destroy left-wing cultural organizations using the Peace Preservation Law. "Red disturbances" in schools and the media were cited as reasons for the arrests of teachers and trade unionists.[74] Between March and October, the Special Higher Police arrested seven thousand communists, including four hundred members of the Japan Proletarian Cultural Federation, which included *shingeki* actors, directors, and playwrights.[75] The interrogation of thousands of suspects required an expansion of the "thought police" (s*hisō keisatsu*) from 70 to 380 officers in Tokyo alone. Altogether police arrested 65,000 persons for thought crimes between 1928 and 1941 (only a few were rightists).[76] One important communist theater activist, Hijikata Yoshi, was wealthy enough to flee to France and Russia to escape arrest. But flight was not possible for most proletarian activists. The Imperial Household Agency stripped Hijikata of his "exalted aristocratic title," and when he returned to Japan in 1941, he was immediately arrested for thought crimes and imprisoned for the duration of the war.[77] In the conservative world of kabuki, well-known producers, directors, playwrights, and actors had nothing to fear from the Peace Preservation Law, but police suppression of leftist *shingeki* artists and groups was unrelenting.

Usually the Special Higher Police tried to persuade a thought criminal to disavow (*tenkō*) his or her beliefs. The aim of the police was to restore an erring individual to proper Japanese behavior and reincorporate that person into the fabric of imperial society. The thought behind this seemingly mild process was that bonds of Japanese ethnicity were infinitely more powerful than mere intellectual conviction. Therefore, even a dedicated communist could be led to realize that he or she was "Japanese" and that behavior harmful to other

Japanese should be abandoned. If *tenkō* was skillfully accomplished, the unpleasantness of trial, conviction, and imprisonment could be avoided.[78] The police called their technique "controlling thought with thought."[79]

Two early cases of political *tenkō* by performing artists occurred in 1933. That July, the Special Higher Police in Tokyo arrested Sawamura Sadako, well-known film actress, for communist agitation (*ajito*). Her older brother, stage and film actor Sawamura Kunitarō, visited Sawako in her jail cell, where he tearfully begged her to renounce communism. She did so, and four days later the police released her.[80] A more significant incident was proletarian playwright-director Murayama Tomoyoshi's arrest and detention a few months later. Murayama was a giant in the proletarian theater movement and a member of the central committee of the Japan Proletarian Cultural Federation. He studied painting in Germany, and when he returned home in 1923 he introduced Constructivism, Dada, and Futurism to Japan. In the 1930s, he turned to the theater, where he became an influential director and playwright. His public renunciation of membership in the Communist Party of Japan set an example that other proletarian theater workers soon followed. On January 31, 1934, the *Miyako* newspaper prophesied correctly that proletarian theater would not survive if the police strictly applied the Peace Preservation Law to artists. The report continued: "Under the irresistible pressure of a tidal wave of fascism," the newly named Central Theater (Chūō Gekijō) group — formerly the Left-Wing Theater (Sayoku Gekijō) — has abandoned red plays (*aka shibai*) and political conflict plays (*sōgi shibai*) in order to "expunge this blot by staging popular plays for general audiences."[81]

A frightening incident had occurred in early 1933, when police beat to death the proletarian writer Kobayashi Takiji a few days after he was arrested for being a member of the Communist Party.[82] The New Tsukiji Troupe had mounted a highly successful dramatization of Kobayashi's novel *Crab Cannery Boat* at the Teikoku Gekijō in July 1929. His death was a tremendous shock and roused great fear among proletarian theater artists. They had admired Kobayashi's ability to fuse ideology with a sense of drama, but his achievements could not shield him from police brutality.[83]

Through the summer of 1934, other troupes affiliated with Puroto made drastic turns in their ideological orientation. Members were frightened. Kobayashi had been killed, friends were in prison, Murayama had defected, and the Left-Wing Theater Troupe had neutered itself. In mid-September, three major proletarian troupes disbanded. Among the survivors, Murayama, Akita Ujaku, Nagata Hideo, and Fujimori Seikichi formed the New Cooperative Theater (Shinkyō Gekidan).[84] For the next six years this group, together with the

New Tsukiji Theater Troupe, bore the brunt of police suppression of *shingeki*. Brian Powell's summary of this period is bleak: "Proletarian drama could not survive. . . . From 1934 onwards there was no possibility of performing anything with an overtly left-wing message."[85]

Suppression of Artistic Decadence

A second target of censorship in the years 1931–1934 was moral decadence that police perceived in many popular art forms. The censor's hand touched lightly on traditional theater forms in the first four years of the war. The occasional kabuki scene or play might be banned by a censor, but these transgressions were minor. Police were more concerned with *ero-guro-nansensu*, "erotic grotesque nonsense," in popular culture. Japan's buttoned-down political and military elite, now desperately preparing for an expanded war, thought there was too much "filth and nonsense," sex and sadism, in stories, novels, and plays. Raunchy stage shows flourished in Tokyo's Asakusa and Osaka's Dotonbori entertainment districts. A single issue of the *Asahi* newspaper in 1932 advertised five *ero-guro* short stories and novels with titles such as "Love an Ugly Man: An International Vale of Tears" and "Group Nonsense: Attention! Officers Are Urinating!"[86]

Beginning August 1, 1934, derogatory comic lines and erotic material in phonograph records came under police surveillance. In a backdoor administrative ruling, Home Ministry officials declared that the Publication Law enacted by the Diet in 1893 applied to commercial phonograph records.[87] The Special Higher Police set up a Record Censorship Unit within its Film Censorship Section, promising that censorship would be a "mere formality" and that hit records would be rated "all pass" (*ōru pasu*).[88] Censors speedily reneged on the promise, banning a dozen briskly selling records. A comedian was forbidden to speak in a female voice or show "excessive emotion," for this promoted immorality. A record with a comic routine about Manchuria, titled "A Nonsense Broadcast," was rejected because it "hindered a correct understanding of Japan's rule of the state of Manchuria," and a comic record titled "Soldiers' Nonsense: Cheerful Soldiers" was ordered withdrawn for "hateful mockery of military discipline."[89] Criticism of the military was a specifically forbidden topic. Once record censorship was in place, it was easy for police to turn the screws more tightly in later years. Among the hundreds of kabuki scenes recorded on 78 rpm phonograph records and widely sold in the 1930s, the censor found none that mocked military attributes.

Japan boasts a long history of indigenous pornography and grotesque litera-

Fig. 2.15. A titillating *ero-guro* story, *Blood of a Female Buddha in a Port Town*: *Tragedy in the Demon's Cave,* April 1932. A long-nosed foreign sailor holding a knife threatens to slash the nearly naked torso of a woman — presumably Japanese. The unseen caption reads: "Follow the tide of blood up the stairs: the mistress has been murdered cruelly . . . her naked body lies wholly stripped of clothes." (From *Asahi shinbun*, April 6, 1932)

ture. And the themes in most of the performing arts that offended the police in the early 1930s were native, including, in kabuki, eroticism and disrespect for the emperor. But already by 1931–1934, government authorities found it convenient to connect, if tenuously, undesirable elements in popular culture with decadent influences from the West. A titillating instance of this is a newspaper advertisement published in April 1932 for a sadism-and-terror story, *Blood of a Female Buddha in a Port Town: Tragedy in the Demon's Cave*, aimed at a popular reading audience (Fig. 2.15). An illustration shows a foreign sailor stabbing to death a nearly naked and helpless woman, who is presumably Japanese. The

man's long nose and round eyes characterize him as a Western, white villain.[90] In 1933, Japanese delegates walked out of the League of Nations, igniting further anti-European feelings in the Japanese popular press.[91] It suited government wartime goals to blame *ero-guro* on foreign decadence.

The effects of the war with China were still largely contained in Japanese society in 1931–1934. The war had not yet absorbed all of the nation's energies. The war did not end in 1935 or 1936, but military action subsided and antiforeign sentiments faded for the time being. Kabuki artists and managers were happy to support national war policies and cooperate with government agencies. The kabuki repertory seemed appropriate at the beginning of the war. New plays were being written to suit the national situation, timely overnight pickle plays about the war and new-history plays that glorified warfare in the past. These were balanced with classic plays that taught feudal loyalty and self-sacrifice. It was thought that almost all of these plays helped prepare citizens for a larger war and hence were valuable to the government.

CHAPTER THREE

Kabuki and the Marco Polo Bridge Incident | 1937–1938

From north China to all China.
—Slogan, 1937

Banzai for His Majesty the Emperor! Banzai for the Great Japanese Empire! — *Triumphal Return of General Nogi*, kabuki play by Mayama Seika, 1937

The hiatus in producing new kabuki plays about the war in China ended in late summer 1937 when the Kwantung Army instigated the incident at Marco Polo Bridge (Lugouqiao) and launched an all-out offensive against China designed to force the Nationalists to sue for peace. The government's new aim was to incorporate all of China into the Japanese Empire — peacefully if possible, but if not, imperial forces were prepared to conquer China by their superior arms and valor. A new slogan expressed the government's breathtaking and, in the end unattainable, ambition: "From 'north China' to 'all China'!"[1] Officially Japan was still not at war but merely embroiled in the "China Incident." And, of course, Japan was not at fault. *Engei gahō* introduced theater readers to the first play about the China Incident, a *shinpa* drama that opened three weeks after Japanese and Chinese soldiers skirmished at the Marco Polo Bridge near Peking. Readers were told that Chinese troops had committed unlawful (*muhō*) aggression against innocent Japanese soldiers, and therefore Japan was forced to defend its national honor:[2]

> Nothing is more significant to the present Sacred War than the China Incident. The first step occurred on July 7, 1937, when Chinese military units unlawfully confronted and opened fire on our troops southwest of Peking at the Marco Polo Bridge. Sadly, on the same day and in the same area, Chinese soldiers put poison in a well, killing a troupe of traveling

> players. Thus began the Japan-China Incident (Nisshi Jihen) that first found life on the stage in Kimura Kinka's new play *Explosion at Dawn*.[3]

The fantastic poisoned well incident, which does not appear in other accounts and seems strangely out of place, may have appealed to theater readers, who were used to exaggerated stage melodrama. Japanese forces captured the Forbidden City on July 29 and continued to advance into China. Japan's war had moved from the Manchurian Incident in 1931 to the Shanghai Incident of 1932 and the China Incident in 1937.[4]

Consciousness of the war in China now framed nearly every theater discourse. The phrases "at this time of emergency" (*kono hijōji ni*), "in a time of war" (*sensōji ka*), and "under present conditions" (*jikyoku ka*) were used ad nauseam to justify any proposal or action. In official government statements, theater workers always voluntarily (*jihatsuteki*) carried out national policies or self-refrained (*jishuku*) from undesirable behavior. Writing after the war, theater historian Kurabayashi Seiichirō likened these clichéd terms to the pillow words (*makura kotoba*) found in traditional Japanese literature. The phrases, though overused and almost meaningless, were nonetheless important because they signaled that the author was following an officially sanctioned line of discourse.[5]

Kabuki and Mobilization of National Spirit

Japan's political and military leaders realized in the fall of 1937 that every imperial subject would have to take part if the nation was to win the expanded continental war. They also realized they had no concerted plan for national mobilization. Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro addressed the issue in October, when he created the Central League for the Mobilization of National Spirit, charged with energizing total citizen support for the war.[6] It is significant that spiritual resolve, not material strength, was its aim. The Japanese belief in a special Japanese Spirit (*Nihon seishin*) fit very well with Fascist and Nazi theories that privileged spiritual over material forces. As Joseph P. Sottile explains: "Fascism, the twentieth-century stepchild of Hegelian Idealism, emphasized spirit as the active force in history. . . . The concept of fascism as a 'third way' between the two great, nineteenth-century materialist ideologies [capitalism and communism] captivated those who were disillusioned with the state of the West."[7] The belief that a third way of spirituality represented a means "to assert man's heroic nature" fit the Japanese militarist mind-set.[8] Even the infamous

Nazi motto "Work Brings Freedom" (*Arbeit macht frei*) has been called "a kind of mystical declaration that self-sacrifice in the form of endless labor does in itself bring a kind of spiritual freedom." Even brutal forced labor could be cynically justified as a "spiritualist" activity.[9] It required no great imagination to see that kabuki plays could "assert man's heroic nature" in the China struggle.

The Cabinet Office of Information had been formed the previous year; now it was put in charge of the prime minister's campaign to foster National Spirit. Together with the Home Ministry, the Office of Information declared October 13–19 National Spiritual Mobilization Week. Citizens were to assemble each morning at eight for twenty minutes of moral instruction, music, patriotic songs, and radio calisthenics.[10] It is difficult to judge what effect these mass assemblies had on citizens' spiritual consciousness (or if meetings took place). But even without official cajoling, theater organizations were eager to be on board the war-mobilization express as it left the station in autumn 1937. Everywhere theater companies made noises of cooperation. It was a time when patriotic Kansai visual artists were feverishly painting the "vivid flames of war" onto battle canvases, having been sent to the front lines, where they saw with their own eyes the excellence of Japan's cause.[11]

On September 9, the superintendent of police in Osaka, the head of the Police Public Safety Division, and army and navy representatives in the Kansai area jointly organized the Association of Patriotic Performance and Film Artists, the first of many "patriotic" umbrella associations designed to "bolster national spiritual ideals" within the arts. Banner headlines announced: "A Patriotic Camp of Performing Arts Established" and "Mass Entertainment: Stronghold of Growing Patriotic Control." Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation chairman Shirai Matsujirō was the first person to join the association.[12] Major kabuki actors Jitsukawa Enjaku II, Bandō Hikosaburō VI, Nakamura Ganjirō II, and Kataoka Ichizō V signed up, too, followed by performers, designers, and directors working in commercial theatrical genres (*shingeki* was not included).[13] Shōchiku formed its own Women's Patriotic Association, Shōchiku branch, to which all of its actresses in Kyoto belonged.[14]

In late 1937, theaters in the Shōchiku and Tōhō chains scheduled programs of patriotic dramas to meet the "exceptional situation." The themes of loyalty and self-sacrifice that are central to traditional kabuki and *bunraku* history plays fit perfectly into the Office of Information plan to generate a stronger warlike spirit among the people. For the October 1937 program at the Kabukiza, Shōchiku producers chose a short program featuring two "patriotic dramas" (*aikoku engeki*): a revival of the new-history play *Kiyomasa at Nijō Castle* and one of the great classics of feudal loyalty, *The Subscription List*. Nakamura

Kichiemon I, who was playing both Kiyomasa and the leading role of Benkei in *The Subscription List*, was not fully recovered from an illness. But he considered this production so important he submitted to a rare newspaper interview before the program opened. The headline read: "Devoted Kichiemon Offers Ailing Body: Calls on Theater to Be Patriotic, Shoulders Two Major Roles." Because Onoe Kikugorō VI, Ichimura Uzaemon XV, and Ichikawa Sadanji II were not performing in October, Kichiemon felt he and other cast members bore a special responsibility to the country:

> Knowing that the entire nation faces an emergency situation, we dare not be idle or fail to act, saying our bodies are weak or ill. For myself, I am devoting heart and soul to preparing my roles as well as I can, doing my best as an actor on the home front. Next month's short program, inexpensively priced . . . , suits the nation's emergency. I do not feel I am making a sacrifice, nor do the producers. Rather we are overjoyed to raise funds for soldiers and sailors of our imperial armed forces. At the Kabuki-za, I am honored to reunite after a long absence with my elders Sōjūrō and Tomoemon, whose sons have already been sent to the battle front.[15]

Kichiemon's diary entries of this time show he was closely following the war news from China. He remarks that the patriotic play choices for the October program were determined directly by Shōchiku, most likely by President Ōtani Takejirō himself. Kichiemon feels duty-bound as a citizen to support his country and the imperial military forces:

> In North China, the Japanese army has won repeated victories. Now the fighting at Shanghai is particularly difficult. Radio reports tell of heavy loss of life every day. This is the first time Shōchiku has designated a particular program that I should do, and I feel the weight of a special responsibility. Day and night Kōshirō and I rehearsed until the blood flowed. The performances are a great success.[16]

Officials of the Tōhō Theatrical Corporation declared that, in response to this period of national emergency, "we will glorify the spirit of patriotism (*aikoku seishin*)" by showing musical war skits and films about military heroes. Tōhō announced its intention to offer "good entertainment for the masses" at extremely cheap prices.[17]

In January 1938, Shōchiku proclaimed that all of its theaters and movie houses were supporting the government's General Mobilization of National Spirit campaign. Dutifully, editors of the Kabuki-za's monthly program published lyrics of a new "Patriotic March" selected by the Office of Information.

From this time forward, all Shōchiku theaters publicized government slogans in support of the war. In 1938 these were positive and expansive: "Chinese-Japanese Friendship," "Peace in East Asia," "Strengthen Japanese Fighting Spirit," and " Cooperate with Extraordinary Economic Plans."[18] Shōchiku publicists, caught up in the China Incident war fever, created pompously patriotic program titles that linked "Grand Kabuki" to the national crisis:[19] "Felicitous Grand Kabuki of the New Year: Celebrating Victories in War," "Splendorous Adornment to Victory in Spring: Grand Kabuki," "In Praise of Japanese Spirit: Eagerly Anticipated Grand Kabuki."[20] These fervid program titles disappeared in Tokyo by 1940, not to return. Perhaps the slogans appeared to be too self-promotional at a time when war casualties were increasing in China.

From the government's point of view, these were not decisive actions; they amounted to little more than window dressing. A military spokesman criticized the "improper handling of military matters" in theater at this crucial time. In one of the first instances of military "guidance" of theater, the spokesman placed five topics out-of-bounds for future war plays:

> Do not disturb military discipline or make light of the military.
> Do not exaggerate the bloodiness or reality of combat.
> Do not depict family grief or loss when soldiers are sent to the front.
> Do not expose or ridicule military faults, even within the Chinese army.
> Avoid scenes of pleasure-seeking and corruption.[21]

Soon after, the army and navy ministries proposed that theater troupes offer free performances at military bases "in view of the war situation." This was the beginning of theatrical programs designed, like American USO shows, to offer consolation or comfort (*ian,* also *imon*) to the nation's fighting troops.[22]

Iizuka Tomoichrō and Citizens' Drama

The most important theater response to Prime Minister Konoe's spiritual mobilization campaign was the creation of the "Citizens' Drama Movement." The movement's key figure was kabuki scholar and Waseda University theater professor Iizuka Tomoichirō. Iizuka immediately supported the prime minister's appeal: "In the aftermath of the China Incident, theater together with shrines, temples, schools, and churches occupy the cultural front lines in the battle for a national society." In a national radio address in October, Iizuka proposed a seminal idea: theater artists should henceforth create a Citizens' Drama (*kokumin engeki*), dedicated to enhancing among the public greater "national spirit" (*kokumin seishin*, literally "citizens' spirit"). Iizuka explained

that a vibrant Citizens' Drama, imbued with Japanese Spirit, was the natural condition of Japanese theater. However, foreign ideologies, addiction to luxury, and weak leadership had corrupted this powerful, natural condition. If these three hindrances were removed, Iizuka told his radio listeners, "national spirit will spring forth naturally from the people's consciousness."[23] Iizuka's vision of a racially pure Japanese theater was uncannily similar to Nazi theories of race and art of that period. Adolf Ziegler, president of Germany's Reich Chamber for the Visual Arts and organizer of the infamous "Degenerate Art" exhibition in Munich in 1937, wrote that same year that, according to National Socialist (Nazi) precepts, "the creative substance is always present in the blood of a nation, and that it only needed to be called into life."[24]

Iizuka envisioned two main characteristics of Citizens' Drama: it must be wholly Japanese, not kowtowing to foreign ideologies, and it must enhance the quality of people's daily lives, not merely entertain. What would be kabuki's place in a new Citizens' Drama? Iizuka had conceived the idea of Citizens' Drama six months before Konoe's call. Iizuka discussed the place of kabuki in Japan's new theater in his first published musings on Citizens' Drama in February 1937. Taking issue with those scholars who loosely referred to kabuki as "our national drama" (*waga kokugeki*), he reasoned that Japan did not possess a national drama. "Each successive theater genre — nō, kabuki, *shinpa, shingeki,* the musical, the revue — had become a class theater (*kaikyū engeki*) playing for only a particular stratum of the audience."[25] He argued that kabuki plays, concerned with local conflicts within the old feudal system, could not speak to nationhood in the modern period. To Iizuka, the claim that kabuki was the creation of townsmen and commoners was merely evidence that a Citizens' Drama designed for *all* the Japanese people could not be based on kabuki.[26]

Basking in high-level government support, Iizuka plunged into a crusade to organize Citizens' Drama nationwide. In August 1938, Iizuka and the important author of popular literature Hasegawa Shin formed the Citizens' Drama League to promote new drama forms that would arise naturally and directly from the people: public theater (*kōkyōgeki*), farm and village theater (*nōsongeki*), school theater (*gakkōgeki*), and regional pageants. The most desirable plays to Iizuka were "dramas from agricultural roots."[27] Iizuka advanced his ideas of a Citizens' Drama through eight long years of war. Observers noted that this ethnically pure, communitarian theater movement was "epochal in our country that knows only commercial theater."[28] Hardly anyone took Citizens' Drama seriously at first. But as the war continued, Iizuka's ideology of a purely Japanese theater gained support within the government until it presented a severe challenge to kabuki.

Kabuki Responds to the China Incident

The suddenly reactivated war in China stimulated kabuki artists and managers to produce a remarkable outpouring of overnight pickle war plays over the coming year and a half. The creation of new plays seems to have been a direct, visceral response to the clamorous war news and not necessarily a product of the government's spiritual mobilization campaign. The editors of *Engei gahō* helped normalize and justify the expanded China war by running in the October 1937 issue "A History of Japan's Wars in Stage Photographs" and three articles about current and past kabuki war plays.[29] Their gist was that plays about the China war in 1937 were part of a long and praiseworthy tradition of kabuki war plays and therefore normal. Perhaps most important, the articles enfolded the present inconclusive war within Japan's long history of military victories, thereby implying that the China conflict would end in a Japanese victory as well.

One of the most powerful lessons that Japanese patriots drew from the nation's victory over European Russia three decades in the past was that "Japanese Spirit" (*Yamato damashii*) could be relied upon to prevail over material strength. Now, although China dwarfed Japan and fielded the larger army on the continent, Japanese patriots believed their greater spiritual elan would prove decisive. Consequently, early war plays stressed the remarkable achievements of individual Japanese soldiers and civilians imbued with the proper spiritual dedication.

One of the first new kabuki plays to ride the surge of national patriotism in 1937 was Kawaguchi Matsutarō's *Military Citizen*, starring Ichikawa Ennosuke II (Fig. 3.1). It opened at the Kabuki-za on August 1, three days after Japan's easy conquest of China's Northern Capital. Its theme, that every civilian has a military task to perform in the China war, resonated with ordinary theatergoers. Political leaders in the early years of the Meiji era had propagated the idea that the nation should be defended by a citizens' army, not by professional samurai warriors. Kawaguchi's title plays on the well-known Meiji era slogan "All Citizens Are Soldiers," affirming collective responsibility for military preparedness (on *All Citizens Are Soldiers*, see Chapter 5). Ennosuke played a drunken bus driver named Tōkichi, "who is all wrought up over the reported unlawful actions of the Chinese" but out of cowardice refuses to operate his bus near the front lines. Confronted with evidence that his inaction is causing fellow Japanese to die in battle, he experiences a profound change of heart. With new-found spirit, he agrees to drive new recruits to the front lines to assure Japan's victory.[30] Despite the play's patriotic theme, the *Engei*

Fig. 3.1. Kawaguchi Matsutarō's overnight pickle play *Military Citizen* opened August 1, 1937, at the Kabuki-za, three weeks after the Marco Polo Bridge Incident occurred. Civilian agent Ueda (Ichikawa Danshirō III, right) persuades feckless bus driver Tōkichi (Ichikawa Ennosuke II, left) to help the army move forward in China despite the danger. (Courtesy Shōchiku Ōtani Library)

gahō critic dismissed the play as a joke: "*Military Citizen* is a 'bandwagon play' (*kiwamonogeki*), said to have been commissioned and written in a single day. It is disgraceful and . . . were it not a China Incident play, audiences would stay away in droves." The critic went on to complain that, overall, Kabuki-za producers were making careless play selections that did not accord with the spirit of the China Incident.[31]

In order to satisfy the public's rekindled interest in the battles raging in China, theater troupes of other genres staged eight military or war plays that August in competition with war plays in kabuki theaters. To name a few, in Osaka a popular comedy troupe staged *Grandma the Soldier* and *Thousand-Stitch Amulet* at the Naka-za, while *The Marco Polo Bridge Incident* was done in *shinpa* style at the Kado-za.[32] At the Tōhō Corporation's Nihon Gekijō (shortened to Nichigeki), *The Outbreak of War Revue* featured a dance line of barelegged female sailors, and the Shōchiku Young Women's Dancing Team at the Koku-

sai Gekijō in Asakusa demonstrated patriotic dancing and singing in sketches titled *Made in Japan* and *Fatherland*.[33]

Among kabuki artists, Ichikawa Ennosuke II was especially active performing in new war plays in 1937. In September at the Kabuki-za, he played the hero, Seiichi, in Kawamura Karyō's *Reborn in Bombing*, subtitled *A Secret Story of Deployment* (Fig. 3.2). Ennosuke's role was another delinquent young man whose life was turned around by serving in the army. When his unit was surrounded by Chinese forces, Seiichi followed the spirit of *maishin*, or bold attack, daring to slip alone through enemy lines to bring a message to army headquarters. Immediately bombers were sent to pulverize the Chinese positions. Seiichi's rescued comrades waved battle flags, shouting "Banzai! Banzai!" as the Japanese planes circled overhead. Seiichi, wounded, returns to his unit and dies, his spirit purified through the bombing attack. The front of the Kabuki-za was covered with a panorama of a battle scene in China, a three-dimensional tank jutting out and the wing of an airplane flying overhead. Spectators remarked on the relatively realistic glimpses of army life and noisy battle scenes on stage. The play's appeal seems to resemble that of action movies today: furious fighting by fifty soldiers, four loudspeakers blasting shrieks of incoming shells, the buzzing of attacking airplanes, and a cascade of fireworks to simulate exploding bombs.[34] It is said the happiest people in the theater business in 1937 were fireworks masters.[35] It is a small miracle that no theater burned down.

In December, Ennosuke and his company drew full houses with a spectacular production of Kawaguchi Matsutarō's *The Final Hours of Commander Kanō* at the Kokusai Gekijō in Asakusa. Ennosuke tells us in his autobiography that, in preparation for the role of the stoic army hero, "I flew to Shanghai for firsthand observation." He visited the monument erected at the site where Commander Kanō was killed in battle, and he brought back souvenirs of the fighting, which he displayed in his dressing room to remind him every day of the atmosphere of the battlefront.[36] The play's combat scenes, spectacularly mounted on the largest stage in the world, were seen by nearly ten thousand spectators a day at matinee and evening performances. In *The Final Hours of Commander Kanō*, Kawaguchi crafted a paradigm for plays set on the battlefield: Commander Kanō resolutely leads his men into battle against overwhelming odds, he is wounded, he dies, and his admiring staff vow to follow his example and win a victory for the emperor. The longest scene in the play is devoted to elucidating Commander Kanō's slow, noble death. He gazes reverently at the regimental flag "bestowed by His Majesty the Emperor" waving over his head. A teetotaler all his life, Kanō refuses the traditional cup of sake

Fig. 3.2. Kawamura Karyō's *Reborn in Bombing: A Secret Story of Deployment*, Kabukiza, September 1937. Reformed hero Seiichi (Ichikawa Ennosuke II) shows his courage when he brings a wounded comrade to safety. (Author's collection)

Fig. 3.3. *The Final Hours of Commander Kanō*, Kokusai Gekijō, December 1937. When Commander Kanō perishes in battle, Commander Iizuka (Ichikawa Chūsha VIII, front right) succeeds him in a formal ceremony featuring unit colors that had been presented by the emperor. (From *Engei gahō*, July 1938)

but shares "a farewell drink of water" with loyal lieutenants. When he weeps good-bye, every man in the unit sobs unrestrainedly. In the play's last scene, Kanō's officers and men honor his departed spirit (Fig. 3.3). At the end they clap their hands in unison to invoke the gods, or *kami*, bow their heads, and, as the curtain closes, "stand together in final silent prayer."[37] Noting that patriotic military plays about the China conflict were flooding Osaka and Tokyo stages, the *Yomiuri* newspaper dubbed 1937 the "era of war plays" in which "every theater is on the front line."[38]

The strong spirit of militarism that pervaded society in 1937 seems to have nudged Mayama Seika to write more plays about his favorite symbol of imperial loyalty, General Nogi Maresuke, the hero of the Russo-Japanese War. Ichikawa Sadanji II created a sensation playing the Meiji era imperial icon in four different kabuki productions during the year, all using scripts by Mayama Seika: *Triumphal Return of General Nogi* (three productions: Tōkyō Gekijō in April, Kokusai Gekijō in October, and Minami-za in December) and *The Last Day of General Nogi* (Tōkyō Gekijō in November).[39]

Triumphal Return of General Nogi demonstrates the reserved but determined nature of the general and his wife. Their two adult sons, Katsusuke and Yasusuke, have died in Russia fighting under their father's command. It is the year following the war, and General Nogi has led his victorious Third Army Corps home to tumultuous popular acclaim. Groups of citizens are happily celebrating in front of Nogi's residence. Mayama's strong patriotic feeling comes through in such devices as the energetic cries of "banzai" that conclude the play's final scene. Nogi subordinates personal grief over his sons' deaths in order to lead citizens in praising the emperor and the nation:

NOGI: Banzai for His Majesty the Emperor!
CITIZENS: Banzai!
NOGI: Banzai for the Great Japanese Empire!
CITIZENS: Banzai!
NOGI: Banzai for of the Great Japanese Empire's subjects!
CITIZENS: Banzai! (*The curtain closes to continued cries of banzai.*)[40]

Commercial theater producers had a strong economic motive to push military and war plays during the autumn and winter of 1937. The effects of the depression and competition from movies and new forms of live theater had virtually destroyed kabuki in Kyoto: hardly three months of kabuki performances were mounted in 1937.[41] In Osaka, between 1931 and 1937 kabuki production dropped by almost half. Summer attendance had been disastrous in Tokyo. Star actors were on vacation in July, August, and September as usual, and younger actors were not drawing customers into the theaters. In September, Shōchiku reported that its kabuki productions in Kyoto and Osaka were in the red and in response cut ticket prices in half.[42] At the same time the company slashed actors' salaries by 50 or even 70 percent, causing a great deal of hardship among low-ranking kabuki actors.[43] The start of the China Incident presented kabuki producers with a heaven-sent opportunity to draw audiences back into the theaters by mounting exciting patriotic war pieces. Theater managers had feared losing money if they produced new plays in the depths of the depression, but the war atmosphere changed all that. Playwrights and directors could rely on a ready-made audience of patriots who wanted to glory in Japan's military victories.[44]

The Capture of Nanking: The China War Is Over

On December 13, 1937, all of Japan erupted in an unprecedented delirium of joy at the news that imperial troops had captured the "Southern Capital of

Fig. 3.4. A propaganda painting by Kanokogi Takerō, *Triumphal Entry into Nanking, China*, shows General Matsui Iwane leading his troops into a picture-perfect city, December 17, 1937. Nanking's three-arched Mountain Gate stands undamaged. Even the telephone poles and electric lines are standing. No Chinese mar the view. This is a Potemkin Village image of a destroyed city. (USASC Photo #FEC-47-80854. Courtesy General Douglas MacArthur Foundation)

the Republic of China, Nanking (Nanjing)." The new Office of Information energetically pressed the official position of the Konoe cabinet, that this victory signified the end of the war with China: all that remained was for the failing Nationalist government to give up resistance and agree to cooperate with Japan. For many Japanese, Nanking's fall meant more than the end of the war: it was proof of the nation's sacred right to lead Asia (Fig. 3.4). Kobayashi Ichizō, president of the Tōhō Theatrical Corporation, found inspiration in Japan's conquests, publishing in 1938 a book of recommendations for ruling and exploiting the vast territory of China. "I believe," he wrote, "the North China Incident is truly a blessing from the Gods."[45]

When the great victory at Nanking was announced, jubilant celebrations at the Kabuki-za were typical of the theater world. Actors and staff decorated backstage hallways with bunting and flags. Banners proclaimed, "Ten thousand cheers for the fall of Nanking" (Fig. 3.5). The pages of *Engei gahō* provide us with a vivid image of actors backstage sharing the excitement of their country's great military success:

> From the day before the fall of the capital, Kikugorō and his entire troupe have been in high spirits as they decorated the first, second, and third

Fig. 3.5. To celebrate the capture of Nanking, actors and staff at the Kabuki-za decorated the lobby with a patriotic display of national flags and bunting, December 1937. The banner reads: "Commemorate the Fall of Nanking with Ten Thousand Cheers." (From *Engei gahō*, January 1938)

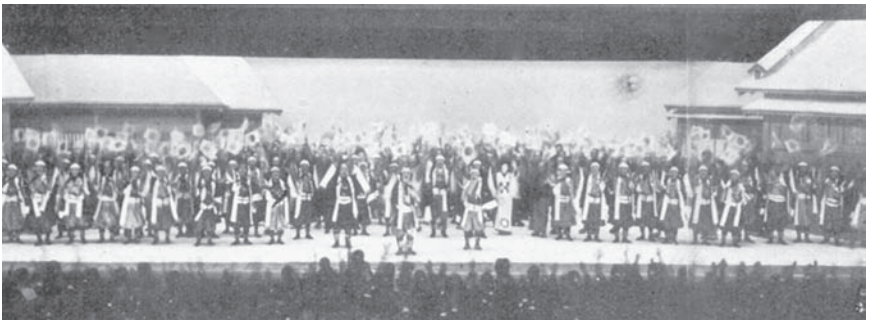


Fig. 3.6. Jubilation at the Kabuki-za, December 13, 1937. Onoe Kikugorō VI (center stage), standing in the midst of a huge cast for *Kanzaki Grass House Tale*, leads actors and audience in calls of "banzai" for the capture of Nanking. (From *Engei gahō*, January 1938)

> floor dressing rooms and hallways at the Kabuki-za. Barrels of celebratory sake fill Kikugorō's dressing room. The captured dress sword of General Sō Tetsugen (Song Zheyuan)[46] is on display together with other war booty in the dressing room shared by [young actors] Baikō, Kuroemon, and Shōroku. In the large dressing room for minor actors, one's gaze is arrested by a beautiful arrangement of large mannequins of a wounded Chinese husband and wife. These and other figures are placed before war maps hanging on the walls.

In the days leading up to the city's capture, Kikugorō added to the program a felicitous dance, *Crane and Tortoise*, as a prayer for Japan's victory. The main

play on the program was *Kanzaki Grass House Tale*, a chauvinistic rewrite of the great revenge drama *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*.[47] The night the Southern Capital fell, Kikugorō asked the audience and two-hundred-member cast to stand (Fig. 3.6). Waving small Japanese flags overhead, actors and audience together cried out "banzai" for the emperor.[48] On the other side of the city, Ennosuke was starring in *The Final Hours of Commander Kanō* at the Kokusai Gekijō. To celebrate Nanking's capture, he invited to the play all the original soldiers in Kanō's unit, including those who had been wounded or were hospitalized. After the final curtain, Ennosuke and the cast came on stage to lead the audience in ringing shouts of "banzai" for all of the heroic soldiers in Kanō's unit.[49] Of course, kabuki audiences in December 1937 did not know about the "Nanking Massacre" or the "Rape of Nanking" that followed the city's capture.[50]

Engei gahō editors addressed a New Year message to theater lovers at the start of 1938 that overflowed with jubilation, tinged with usual governmental caution:

> Joyous Victorious New Year! Our Imperial Military Forces have gained victory after victory in battle after battle. The Southern Capital, Nanking, quickly fell while this issue was being edited. We humbly offer congratulations on this New Year, more than ever an occasion for celebration. Nevertheless, without gloating over victory, we Japanese citizens must strengthen our spiritual resolve to face numerous problems that lie ahead.[51]

The flood of China Incident stage spectacles that had begun in the autumn of 1937 continued through 1938. A long article in the *Miyako* newspaper, "War Plays: A Circle of Battles," marveled at the large number and variety of war plays (*sensō geki*), or war pieces (*sensōmono*), produced in kabuki, *shinkokugeki*, *shinpa*, and other commercial genres that year.[52]

Ichikawa Ennosuke II continued to star in new war plays. He was in four China Incident productions during 1938. He played in *The Final Hours of Commander Kanō* in January (a continuation of the December 1937 production), *Patriotic Military March* in March, *Commander Iizuka* in October, and, one of the war's most audience-friendly plays, *Military Packhorse*, in November.[53]

The plays show surprising variety in theme and atmosphere. The mood of *Patriotic Military March* is elegiac. Three wounded friends from the same unit are recuperating in an army hospital in Japan (Fig. 3.7). Wives and sisters attend the men, speeding their recovery. Two of the nearly recovered soldiers, Privates Moriya (Ichikawa Danshirō III) and Sada (Ichikawa Chūsha VIII), are happily preparing to rejoin their old unit on the China front. The third sol-

dier, Private Ijichi (Ichikawa Ennosuke II), is so seriously wounded he must go home to be discharged. It provokes deep sadness in Ijichi's heart to part from his comrades and no longer fight for his country. He sadly listens to a patriotic military march played on a phonograph brought by his sister. An *Engei gahō* critic judged the acting average, the script not very good, and the link between story and play title "a stretch."[54] But audiences relished the tearful scenes of mothers and sisters tending the wounded men. Kawaguchi's script was staged by five theater companies in 1938, confirming the play's uncommon popularity.[55]

In contrast, *The Final Hours of Commander Kanō*, which I have already discussed, impressed audiences with realistic battle scenes and a noble individual death. Kawaguchi Matsutarō, the author of both plays, wrote prolifically for the commercial theater, not only for kabuki, but for *shinpa* and other popular genres also.[56] He was tapped by Kikuchi Kan to join the first Pen Brigade (*pen butai*) group, dispatched to China in 1938: "He followed the army to the front lines in order to truthfully depict a soldier's humanity. Using his experiences during a month-long observation tour of the front lines near Shanghai, Kawaguchi composed one of the first war plays to result from the Pen Brigade program."[57] Today we would say that Kawaguchi, Kikuchi, and others were "embedded" writers, sponsored by and indebted to the military. The army and navy extended rare privileges to Pen Brigade members: free travel, free accommodations and food, interviews with important military figures, and access to off-limits war areas. In return they were expected to write favorable reports of their experiences. Most Pen Brigade authors produced uplifting stories, novels, poems, plays, or personal reports after returning home. Motivations to cooperate were complex, but most writers produced favorable reports out of a mixture of patriotism, bonding with the troops, and an egoistic desire to be part of important events. A few Pen Brigade novelists, poets, and painters dared to show the cruelty and horror of war, the waste, the killing, and the dying. And a very few depicted the reality that Japanese soldiers could be cruel, selfish, frightened, or cowards.[58] But it is notable that Pen Brigade playwrights did not criticize the war.[59] As one reporter put it, *The Final Hours of Commander Kanō* marked playwright Kawaguchi's "triumphal return" from battle.[60]

Commander Iizuka, a three-act play staged in October, was a direct sequel to *The Final Hours of Commander Kanō*: when Kanō dies, Iizuka inherits command of Kanō's unit (Fig. 3.8). As with many sequels, a new author was responsible for the writing: professional kabuki playwright Yoshida Genjirō. The resolution of the plot in act 3 is almost identical to *The Final Hours of Commander Kanō*: Commander Iizuka, played by Ichikawa Sadanji II (see

Fig. 3.7. Kawaguchi Matsutarō's *Patriotic Military March*, Tōkyō Gekijō, March 1938. In a military hospital in Japan, Private Ijichi (Ichikawa Ennosuke II) in white hospital kimono is dismayed to learn he cannot return to the front lines. Ijichi's younger sister, Sueko (Bandō Shūchō IV), weeps on hearing the distressing news. (Tōkyō Gekijō program, March 1938, author's collection)

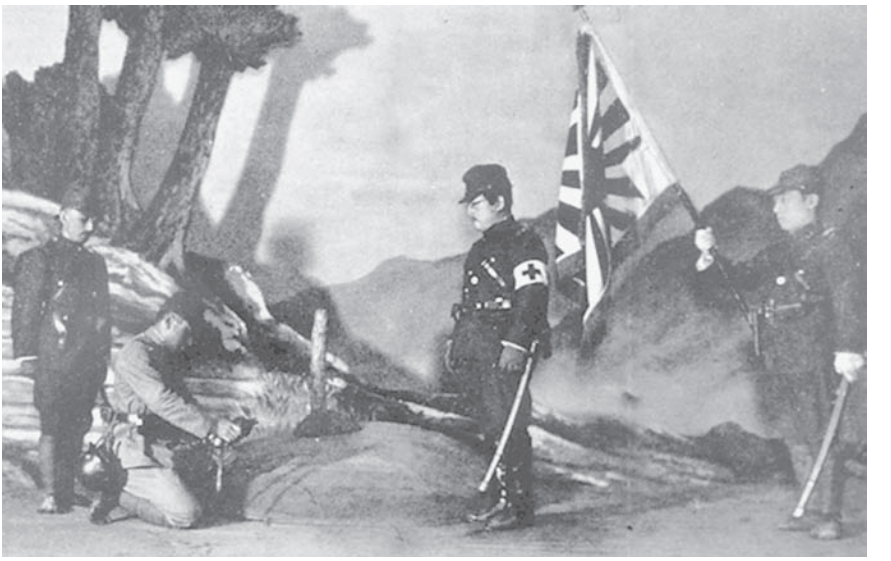


Fig. 3.8. Yoshida Genjirō's "spiritualist" drama *Commander Iizuka*, Tōkyō Gekijō, October 1938. Leading his troops into furious battle, Commander Iizuka has been killed. Honoring his spirit, standard bearer Lt. Yokogawa (Ichikawa Chūsha VIII), medical officer Sata (Ichikawa Ennosuke II), and Lt. Kiyofuji (Ichikawa Enshō III) watch Corporal Shibukawa (Ichikawa Danshirō III) pour fresh water to purify Iizuka's grave. (From *Engei gahō*, November 1938)

Fig. 11.8), leads his men into battle against overwhelming odds, is mortally wounded, and "achieves heroic stature in death."[61] Ichikawa Ennosuke II plays the secondary role of medical officer Sata, who ministers to the dying Iizuka. The play was intended to highlight a uniquely "Japanese" essence of spiritual bravery and endurance. Yet the simple story of battlefield sacrifice that interweaves personal sentiment with national commitment is not unique to Japan and can be found in the war literature of many countries. The Hollywood film *Ernie Pyle's Story of G.I. Joe* (1945), for example, ends with the death of Captain Bill Walker, commander of Company C, 18th Infantry, who has bravely led his men through terrible battles in North Africa and Italy. He is killed, and in the final scene, enlisted men gently kneel beside his corpse and murmur a few words to honor him. The men are called to their feet by their new company commander, and they march off through the rain, more committed than ever to winning the next battle.[62]

Commander Iizuka is most interesting in its early acts. Act 1 is set in Iizuka's family home in Tomioka Village in the mountainous back country of Gunma Prefecture. Conversation brings out the bedrock values of frugality, dedica-

tion, and obedience by which the family lives. Commander Iizuka brings these virtues to his duties in the army. Act 2 is set in a civilian area in China. Frolicking Chinese children are given sweets by soldiers under Iizuka's command. Iizuka offers his men an idealistic, humanitarian explanation of the nation's aims in China:

> COMMANDER IIZUKA (*to his men*): We should be conscious of what is beautiful in China. We should mutually respect and love one another with Japanese and Chinese people grasping each other's hands. I want to save Chinese adults from their fascination with and worship of the white race. This is a fever that must be broken. Be affectionate with Chinese children and . . . correctly train their hearts. None of us know if we will be alive tomorrow. However, if we truly love the Fatherland and if we cultivate a true consciousness of the ideals of Peace in the East, may not a new generation of Japanese and Chinese children come forth?[63]

The next play that Kawaguchi wrote for Ennosuke in 1938, *Military Packhorse,* tapped a different vein of audience enthusiasm. The two main figures are a packhorse named Koiwa and its driver, Private First Class Sekiguchi, a farmer before the war. The play consists of humorous and sentimental scenes through which a charming picture of mutual devotion emerges (Fig. 3.9). Working-class audiences that crammed the cavernous Kokusai Gekijō in plebeian Asakusa were surprised and delighted to see a live horse on stage (rather than two actors in a kabuki horse costume).

In an interview, Kawaguchi said he had been deeply moved when he observed how faithfully horses worked for their masters in China, even in the maelstrom of battle.[64] Early in the play, Sekiguchi is forced to leave wounded Koiwa behind. The horse miraculously makes his way twenty-five miles to the front lines, where he finds Sekiguchi trapped in a pocket surrounded by Chinese. Sekiguchi addresses Koiwa, asking him what they should do:

> SEKIGUCHI: Look, Koiwa, wouldn't it be shameful to die in a dreary place like this? Come on, let's look for a better spot. Let's find the right place to give our lives splendidly for the emperor. We'll die together. All right? Let's go.

Sekiguchi gets on Koiwa's back and they ride off. Explosions come from the enemy lines, then silence, implying that Seikiguchi and Koiwa have been killed.

In the final scene, Sekiguchi's commanding officer, First Lieutenant Tōdō,

Fig. 3.9. On the giant stage of the Kokusai Gekijō in Asakusa, Private Sekiguchi (Ichikawa Ennosuke II) poses with his faithful horse, Koiwa, in *Military Packhorse*, November 1938. Koiwa is limping on a wounded left front leg. (From Tanaka Jun'ichirō, ed., *Shochiku shichijūnen shi*)

addresses the corpses of Sekiguchi and Koiwa lying side by side in the center of the captured enemy position: "Your courageous attack allowed us to occupy an important enemy strongpoint. I am touched by your beautiful compassion. You have both died for the sake of your country." The dialogue that follows echoes famous lines in *The Village School*, the classic play of feudal loyalty:

PRIVATE KATAOKA: Commander, Private Sekiguchi died with a smile on his lips.

COMMANDER TŌDŌ: Did he smile? . . . Yes, he surely died joyfully.[65]

The commander brings out two Japanese national flags: "Kataoka, you were Sekiguchi's close friend. Cover his corpse with our nation's flag. And Yuzawa, cover Koiwa's body with this flag." The unit stands in parade formation, the men present arms, the bugle sounds, and the curtain closes. The sentimental scenes between Ennosuke and Koiwa were remarkably appealing, and when soldier and horse died together, the huge auditorium was filled with sniffles and tears.[66]

In support of the war, Shōchiku producers continued their policy of scheduling patriotic plays of considerable variety. In 1938, kabuki actors under contract to Shōchiku played in dramatizations of two best-selling novels by

Fig. 3.10. Kaneko Yōbun's dramatization of Pearl Buck's novel *Sons* was a huge success at the Tōkyō Gekijō in 1938. The symbolic Chinese opera makeup of Tiger Wang's nephew irrevocably marked the pockmarked character as "other" to the Japanese audience. (From *Engei gahō*, April 1938)

Pearl Buck, *The Good Earth* and *Sons*. Both scripts emphasized the wretched poverty and cultural "backwardness" of China (in contrast to Japan's modern culture) (Fig. 3.10). In *Sons*, third son Tiger Wang gathers a band of followers and sets himself up as a minor warlord. In the final scene, Wang, richly portrayed by Ichikawa Ennosuke II, watches in horror as his beloved son joins the communist revolutionary army. The obvious message to Japanese audiences was that China could "go communist" without Japan's steadying hand.[67] These were brilliant pieces of propaganda in that their negative portrayals of Chinese warlords and capitalists could not be blamed on Japan. Pearl Buck was a world-famous American who had lived almost all of her life in China, and presumably she knew what she was writing about.

Shōchiku producers continued their policy of scheduling traditional kabuki plays that praised feudal loyalty. Military officers were especially fond of *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*, *Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani*, and *The Village School*, and these were repeatedly staged.[68] Characters in these well-known dramas are willing, for the sake of their feudal lord, to sacrifice their lives, allow their young children to be killed, or carry out vengeance against an enemy (Fig. 3.11). Spectators who witnessed heroes from the past obeying the call of duty (*giri*) were being conditioned to do the same in their

Fig. 3.11. In *Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani*, Matsumoto Kōshirō VII as General Kumagai Naozane prepares to decapitate his teenage son, Kōjirō (Sawamura Sōnosuke II). Through this extreme sacrifice he will save the life of the emperor's son, Atsumori. (Author's collection)

own lives. If stage heroes give no thought to personal desires (*ninjō*), should not audiences, too, forgo the lures of selfish behavior? Should they not heed government appeals for citizens to do their duty and sacrifice more and more for the nation's sake?

The China War Continues: Kabuki Must Change

When the Nationalist government did not surrender following the capture of Nanking, Japanese officials began to warn of a "long-term war" (*chōki sen*). And in a few years, the prime minister would call it a "long, hard war" (*chōki nansen).* Citizens were asked to give up their individual desires and place the needs of the country first. A new strategy was necessary to end the China stalemate. Twice Prime Minister Konoe broadcast directly to the Chinese people asking them to end the China Incident and join Japan in a New Order in East Asia that would expel Western imperialism. Chiang Kai-shek rejected Konoe's New Order statements out of hand. The governments of Britain and the United States interpreted the New Order in East Asia to mean that after China was reduced to a vassal state, the rest of Asia, too, would be incorpo-

rated into a Japanese-led pan-Asian bloc, an eventuality neither London nor Washington was prepared to accept. The Anglo-American democracies stiffened their resolve to counter as best they could Japan's Asian moves.[69]

"Japanese Theater Faces a Great Turning Point," shouted the headline of the January 1938 issue of *Engei gahō*. "In order to overcome the China Incident, every aspect of Japanese theater must change — management, performance hours, play content, actors — everything." This was followed by articles by two veteran playwrights whose cool attitude showed how far the government had to go. Japan's most important living playwright, Okamoto Kidō, wrote in "Kabuki after the 'Incident'" that he could not possibly prophesy "what changes in kabuki must come in the aftermath of the incident." Kabuki drama did not change after Japan's earlier wars with China and Russia, he said, "nor did Western theater change because of the First World War." Okamoto thought it was unlikely kabuki would change because of the China Incident.[70] This opinion was not at all in line with government policy.

Similarly, "Changes Depend on Citizens' Preferences," by professional kabuki playwright Ikeda Daigo, did not suggest that the situation was urgent. Further, Ikeda used suspect English loan words to make his points, writing that it was easy to call kabuki an "amusement" in which "serious" elements should now be cultivated. In drama, "passion" should replace "sentimentalism," and "sincerity" should replace the "superficial." But kabuki posed a significant reform problem, Ikeda believed. It was stagnant. Could kabuki change enough to satisfy a new mass audience? And would it survive as kabuki if it did change? (Critics and artists had argued about "change" in kabuki for sixty years, so Ikeda was not raising a new issue.) According to Ikeda, "The greatest danger is that kabuki's refined conventions of acting . . . will not properly convey, but rather distort, the content" of new plays.[71] These two practicing playwrights worked with kabuki actors all the time, and this last point was of great concern to them professionally.[72] However, officials in the Office of Information and the Home Ministry were not concerned with artistic matters; they wanted plays that would rouse workers to increase military production and urge citizens to greater national loyalty.

On April 1, 1938, the Diet enacted a General National Mobilization Law, authorizing a high degree of government control over political parties, the economy, and social organizations when the need arose. Although it was not much more than a slogan, Shōchiku clearly had government expectations in mind when it titled its October 1938 offering at the Tōkyō Gekijō "Strengthened Content, Lowered Admission Fees: Reformed Grand Kabuki Program."[73]

Mass Capitulation of Proletarian *Shingeki*

Throughout 1938, the prime minister's call to mobilize "Japanese fighting spirit" resounded in radio, press, literature, film, and theater. After Nanking was captured, artists and politicians alike came under enormous pressure to support Japanese soldiers who were dying in China. Proletarian political parties and cultural figures recanted and pledged to support the war effort.[74] Proletarian *shingeki* leaders wiggled and obfuscated as best they could but in the end they, too, "recognized the powerful influence of the new war situation."[75] For its opening play of the fall season, 1937, the New Tsukiji Troupe staged a politically safe "agriculturalist" drama, adapted from Nagatsuka Takashi's immensely popular novel *The Soil* (*Tsuchi*). The play offered an uplifting tale, a *bidan*, of peasant hardship and perseverance based on real people, some still living. The play script by Itō Teisuke downplayed the "evil customs" and "communal malice" depicted in the novel. Instead Itō's dramatization became an upbeat "celebration of community" that was necessary "as Japan mobilized for war."[76] Troupe members were ecstatic when the endeavor received high official praise for "resuscitating the past."[77]

In December, a newspaper headline announced that the New Cooperative Theater was abandoning its proletarian policies: "New Cooperative Theater Troupe Recants at Last, Chat Today at Metropolitan Police Headquarters Finishes Leftists." Troupe leaders Murayama Tomoyoshi (who had complained about censorship a decade earlier), Takizawa Osamu, and veteran playwright Nagata Hideo promised a "180-degree turn" away from proletarian ideology. As expected, they said this was for the sake of the war:

> The New Cooperative Theater has been active as a leftist troupe. But we are now following the broad policy of the nation in wartime. . . . From now on we will avoid the concept of left wing or right wing. We will stage plays that are cultural in a good sense, reevaluating them on the basis of our national culture. . . . We wish to do work that is pure art and that conforms to national policies.[78]

A newspaper account succinctly observed that those in *shingeki* who had managed to cling to their "progressive ideals" in 1931–1933 had been sandbagged by the China Incident. They were now "singing of protecting the artistic nature" of theater.[79] The government held all the cards in the patriot game.

These public renunciations of leftist ideology, whether genuine or feigned, had severe consequences for proletarian theater. In February 1938, Murayama

Fig. 3.12. In February 1938, the leftist New Cooperative Theater Troupe took its "first step" away from proletarian drama with an innocuous musical, *Spring Fragrance: A Tale of a Faithful Wife*, based on a Korean folk narrative. Directed by Murayama Tomoyoshi at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō. (From *Engei gahō*, May 1938)

Tomoyoshi announced that the New Cooperative Troupe's next production would be a musical version of a traditional Korean folk narrative, *Spring Fragrance: A Tale of a Faithful Wife* (Fig. 3.12). Korean artists would train the Japanese cast in Korean song and movement and authentic costumes, and *pan'sori* musical instruments would be brought from Seoul so that "homeland Japanese can understand the true thoughts and customs of the peninsular people." In Murayama's words, "This will be the New Cooperative Theater's first step toward rehabilitation after recanting (*tenkō*)."[80]

The April production of *Spring Fragrance* at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō turned out to be a great crowd pleaser. Government officials liked its conservative Confucian themes, and the entire project fit well within government claims that a common culture linked Japan with other Asian races. The Office of Information saw the production as a rare opportunity to improve Japan's brutal image in Korea: the office sent the troupe on tour to Seoul, Pyongyang, Taegu, Pusan, and other Korean cities that fall.[81] *Spring Fragrance* was the kind of production that forward-looking kabuki actors could, and should, have staged, for they were masters of stylized acting. But kabuki producers were much too cautious and conservative to consider staging a Korean play.

As we will see in the next chapter, the war with China was far from finished. As the war continued, kabuki lovers had to explain why "frivolous" theater was entitled to a share of the nation's precious national resources. Of course kabuki artists supported the war; they were patriotic citizens and artists. And kabuki productions of traditional and new plays almost certainly raised spectators' national spirit. You could not imagine an antigovernment play reaching a commercial kabuki stage.[82] But was that enough in a time of great national crisis? The New National Drama star Tatsumi Ryūtarō confessed to his shame when a drunken soldier confronted him outside a theater in Osaka in 1937. Patriotic banners and flags were waving on every street corner and columns of soldiers departing for the front filled the streets with shouts of "banzai!" The soldier, flushed and slurring his words, shouted contemptuously at Tatsumi: "So you're an actor, are you? This is a time of emergency. How dare you tart up your face with white paint and strut around the stage! What's a damned actor anyway? Are you even a citizen of Japan?" Tatsumi was especially hurt because he was a soldier himself. That day he was performing in a "Morale Performance to Support Imperial Forces Stationed in Manchuria and China," and the next morning he was scheduled to depart for the front to face "a hail of bullets and shellfire."[83] Theater artists and their apologists expected that entertainments of all kinds would raise home front morale and thereby bolster the war effort. But the issue resurfaced later when the life of the empire was in jeopardy. In the final analysis, did kabuki really matter? By the end of the war, it mattered hardly at all.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Darkening Storm | 1939

"Northern Advance" and "Southern Advance."
— Two slogans, 1939

Plays and films must "extol patriotic ideals."
— Conference statement, 1939

During 1939 the government exhibited a paralyzing ambivalence in national policy. Stalemated in China with no good end in sight, the army was obsessed with a Northern Advance (*hokushin*) policy aimed at Soviet Russia, its most hated enemy. The navy argued for a Southern Advance (*nanshin*) to gain access to Southeast Asia's oil, rubber, and tin, raw materials essential to a modern war. Diplomacy was unmoored as well. Should Japan maintain its traditional friendship with Britain and the United States? Or should Japan's tentative negotiations with Germany be pushed through to achieve a formal alliance with Europe's strongest military power? Prime Minister Konoe and his cabinet resigned in January, having failed to resolve the China war. The next three Japanese cabinets would face problems that ranged far beyond Japan's family quarrel with its Chinese neighbor. Japanese diplomats lobbied hard to sell the new Manchurian nation to Europe and America, without success (Fig. 4.1). In July, the United States declined to renew its existing commercial treaty with Japan, making American trade restrictions possible. In August, Germany signed a stunning nonaggression pact with the Soviet Union, thus rendering meaningless Japan's Anti-Comintern Pact with Germany. Within a week, the *Wehrmacht* invaded Poland, and Germany was at war with Britain and France. A week later, on September 8, 1939, President Roosevelt declared a state of limited emergency in the United States. Because of indecisive leadership and an inability to control outside events, none of Japan's grave military and domestic issues were decided in 1939.

American public opinion had turned increasingly hostile to Japan through the 1930s. The majority view of the Western democracies was that Japan had instigated the China Incident at the Marco Polo Bridge, and Japanese armies

Fig. 4.1. The Manchurian Pavilion of Industry in Tokyo was constructed in contemporary international style, illustrating the government's contention that Manchuria had become modern and prosperous under Japanese tutelage. (Author's collection)

were pursuing unlimited aggression on the continent. The New York World's Fair in 1939 presented a precious opportunity for Japan to show its gentle side to the international community and thereby shore up its damaged reputation. American fair planners requested a *bunraku* puppet theater company, while in Tokyo, the World's Fair Japan Day Committee considered a group of sumo wrestlers as cultural envoys. In the end the Tokyo committee decided that a Takarazuka Young Women's Musical Troupe of one hundred dancers and singers would be "the most suitable." A Takarazuka troupe coming directly from Japan would perform at the Golden Gate International Exposition in San Francisco before going on to New York to join a second Takarazuka troupe that was in the midst of an extended tour of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy (twenty-six cities in ninety days). The joint troupe would give lavish performances at the New York World's Fair in April, "the aim of which, particularly in this time of war, will be to introduce Japan's majestic art."[1] Apparently the committee did not consider kabuki for the role of cultural ambassador. Perhaps the gentler quality of female performance suited the propaganda aims of the Office of Information and the Foreign Ministry better than all-male kabuki.[2]

The Japan Day committee carefully selected a program they believed would appeal to a foreign audience: four delicate female dances and a musical play, *Outsider Okichi*, about the young housemaid (and mistress?) who was forced to minister to the needs of Townsend Harris, the first American envoy to Japan. The Foreign Ministry immediately objected to *Outsider Okichi*, saying

Fig. 4.2. Japanese audiences found vastly appealing the many plays about Okichi, house servant of the first American envoy, Townsend Harris. Mayama Seika's *Outsider Okichi and the Imperial Restoration Group* links Okichi (Ichikawa Shōchō II) to rebels in Kyoto struggling to achieve the Imperial Restoration. Kabuki-za, August 1931. (Author's collection)

that American audiences would certainly not like this play "whose truthfulness cannot be determined." Since this was the last thing government sponsors wished for, the play was withdrawn (Fig. 4.2).[3]

Kabuki Unsettled

For kabuki, 1939 was a year of uncertainty and flux. The previous year Shōchiku and Tōhō had concluded hard negotiations to respect each other's theatrical troupes and contract actors. Although the companies were ferocious competitors, they made this difficult arrangement "to serve the cause of patriotic entertainment in this time of national emergency."[4] Within a year, that hard-fought pact was falling apart and Shōchiku's kabuki actors were being juggled around in ways that surprised observers. In January, Shōchiku president Ōtani dispatched Morita Kanya XIV and Sawamura Tosshi VIII to Osaka, leading to the charge that he was "dismantling the Young Stars' Kabuki Troupe" that the two actors led in Tokyo.[5] In March, newspapers noted that Shōchiku and

Tōhō were in "a fight to the death" over young women's musical theater.[6] Both companies were devoting personnel and resources to capture the popular audience, drawing attention away from traditional kabuki.

In November, two major kabuki theaters changed management. Shōchiku took control of the formerly independent Shinbashi Enbujō, possibly to house future productions of the ideologically temperamental Vanguard Theater Troupe. And in a kind of company swap, Tōhō took over management of the Teikoku Gekijō from Shōchiku. This unleashed speculation that Matsumoto Kōshirō, Nakamura Kichiemon, and perhaps Sawamura Sōjūrō would leave Shōchiku and move to Tōhō. In an attempt to one-up Shōchiku in government favor, Tōhō announced its intention to use the Teikoku Gekijō for productions of Tōhō Citizens' Drama (Tōhō Kokumin Geki).[7] In all sections of Japan's entertainment world groups and individuals were altering course in response to the "needs of the time." And not least, kabuki was wallowing in economic trouble. The years 1938–1939 marked the lowest point of Japan's economic depression. "Because kabuki productions continue to go in the red," one reporter wrote, *shingeki* troupes were able for the first time to book large theaters in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto for extended runs, replacing kabuki and other traditional programs.[8]

Few War Plays

Most Japanese citizens felt enormous disappointment that the China Incident had not been successfully resolved after eight years of bloodletting. After the public's great explosion of enthusiasm for the war in 1937 and 1938, perhaps it is not surprising that this level of commitment could not be sustained. Only a handful of new kabuki plays in 1939 addressed the war. The most common explanation is that the fighting in China, now intermittent and inconclusive, was not providing playwrights with noteworthy incidents to dramatize. Perhaps audience interest in the war did not diminish, but weekly newsreels and special frontline film reports covered the daily war news better than kabuki overnight pickle plays could. From the beginning of the China Incident, "we have seen live theater performances and first-run dramatic films devoured by newsreels."[9] As the history of the Misono-za in Nagoya put it: "The outbreak of the China Incident shocked the theater world in mid-1937, and audiences called for nothing but 'seasonal goods' (*kiwamono*) — plays about current events. But then newsreels taken at the front lines were shown everywhere and all the time. Stage plays about the war hardly seemed necessary. Gradually, things returned to normal."[10]

In addition, kabuki producers were beginning to face material shortages and higher costs. On October 18, 1939, the government placed a wide variety of common consumer goods under price control, thus bringing home to civilians the seriousness of the war. In a perversion of intentions, government price controls helped kabuki in a time of serious theater depression. Black marketeers racked up enormous profits selling food and clothing at illegal prices. Simultaneously big-business war profiteers were pocketing fortunes from government contracts. A newly rich class spent lavishly on cigarettes, liquor, food, geisha — and on first-class theater seats. These excesses helped kabuki in the short run, but in the long run they led to stronger theater controls that would virtually destroy Grand Kabuki.

If most people in the kabuki world avoided war plays during 1939, Osaka-based commercial playwright-director Gōda Toku was an exception. He wrote rabidly nationalistic plays for Kansai kabuki troupes throughout the war.[11] Typical are three war plays he wrote in 1939 for an independent troupe performing so-called Combined New and Old Drama (*shinkyū gōdō geki*). The troupe was led by Ennosuke II's younger brother, the Kansai actor Ichikawa Kodayū II, and included actresses Ichimatsu Emiko and Taki Renko.[12] *Horses and Soldiers* was about a detachment of secret agents working in China. In *Tank Commander Nishizumi: Warrior God*, Gōda wrote the first kabuki play about Captain Nishizumi Kojirō, a hero of the 1937 attack on Nanking. A photograph of the Naka-za production that April shows a fearless Nishizumi surveying the battlefield from the open hatch of a tank.[13] And in *Tosa Naval Squadron*, a new-history play set in the late Tokugawa period, Gōda heaped praise on the patriotic Tosa clan leader Sakamoto Ryōma, who championed a strong Japanese navy capable of repelling foreign intrusions. The New and Old Drama Troupe also staged *Tsukigata Hanpeita*, a "beautiful story of imperial loyalty," written by Yukitomo Rifu in 1919 and often revived. The hero's words of greeting to his lover Somehachi are famous: "The spring rain falls, let us dampen ourselves." As a fanatic imperial loyalist who wagered his life battling Tokugawa samurai, Tsukigata was an excellent model of Japanese Spirit in 1939.[14] Troupe leader Kodayū played the leading roles in all four plays: Secret Agent Etō, Tank Commander Nishizumi, Sakamoto Ryōma, and Tsukigata Hanpeita.[15]

It seems that Shōchiku's producers in Tokyo did not think overnight pickle plays about the China war would interest their audiences in 1939, and none appeared on Grand Kabuki programs in the capital. However, in April, Shōchiku supported Ichikawa Sadanji's appearance in two new-history plays intended to parallel current events. *Regimental Flag* by Yoshida Genjirō, based on a brief episode in Sakurai Chūon's popular novel *New Battlefront* (*Shin senba*),

was yet one more drama about the Russo-Japanese War (Fig. 4.3). The story, "direct and unadorned," tells of an elderly retired army captain who journeys to Manchuria carrying his old unit's regimental flag. He deposits this precious gift from the emperor on the graves of comrades who had died there. Shōchiku's official history says that Sadanji's portrayal of the elderly veteran was "a wonderful example of a kabuki actor performing in a modern play." On the same bill, Sadanji also starred as Ōishi Kuranosuke in the premiere of *Courtesans' Parade in Shumoku Town*, the fourth drama in Mayama Seika's *Loyal Retainers of the Genroku Era* play cycle. According to Citizens' Drama supporter Ōyama Isao, these new-history dramas by Mayama were admirable, being "written with an unrestrained spirit of *bushidō*."[16] In November, also at the Kabuki-za, Sadanji was featured in the premiere of Yoshida Genjirō's new-history play *The Last Day of Edo Castle*, about the painful end of the Tokugawa Shogunate and the glorious dawning of the Meiji era.[17]

In the aftermath of the China Incident, the Tōhō Theater Troupe (Tōhō Gekidan) staged a small number of war plays in direct competition with Shōchiku's kabuki productions. This mixed company was made up of rising mainline kabuki actors stolen from Shōchiku, and film and *shingeki* actresses under contract to Tōhō. Among them were superlative young actors who in adulthood would takes the names Ichikawa Danjūrō XI, Kataoka Gadō V, Ichikawa Jukai III, Nakamura Kanzaburō XVII, and Bandō Mitsugorō VIII. It was hard work, moving constantly between Tōhō theaters in Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya, Kobe, and Yokohama, but the young actors were enthused by the opportunity to star in major roles denied them by Shōchiku's rigidly hierarchical management. From its founding in 1935, the troupe staged eclectic programs of kabuki classics acted in traditional style, modern dramas (*gendai geki*), and new plays, including war plays, by young authors presumably attuned to the times.[18] Nakamura Kanzaburō XVII mentions in his autobiography that while with the Tōhō Theater Troupe he acted in four China war plays, *Shanghai* (1937), *Dawn of a Continent* (1938), *Secret Agent of a Nation at War* (1938), and *Battle Line* (1939).[19] In *Shanghai*, Kanzaburō entered riding a motorcycle and dressed in snappy black leather jacket, scarf, knickers, boots, and brimmed cap.[20] *Shanghai* and *Dawn of a Continent* were so-called war report dramas (*repo dorama*), rapid-paced, multiscene revues that featured topical news often presented in song and dance. Critics were divided. The usually caustic Ihara Toshirō claimed he was bored with the lack of form, while Takenaka Sōkichi, writing in *Engei gahō*, cheered on Kanzaburō and Mitsugorō for their unusual acting. Troupe leaders melded into the ensemble, a rare circumstance in kabuki. The troupe also did Western plays in translation, including

Fig. 4.3. Ichikawa Sadanji II in Yoshida Genjirō's *Regimental Flag*, Kabuki-za, April 1939. An elderly, retired army captain travels to Manchuria to return his unit's flag to the place where his comrades perished in battle. (From Nagayama Takeomi, ed., *Kabuki-za hyakunen shi, honbun hen*, 1)

Fig. 4.4. *Porgy* by the Tōhō Theater Troupe, Yūraku-za, November 1936. Nakamura Kanzaburō XVII played the *onnagata* role of Maria (standing) and Bandō Mitsugorō VIII, the crippled Porgy. *Shingeki* actress Natsukawa Shizue, who played a waiflike Bess, went on to become enormously popular in "modern girl" (*moga*) stage and film roles. (From *Engei gahō*, December 1936)

a revival of *Porgy* in 1936 (Fig. 4.4).[21] These miscellaneous programs failed to attract a loyal audience, and Tōhō dissolved the troupe in September 1939.

Censorship in 1939

Unrest also existed among government officials responsible for kabuki guidance. Prior censorship of kabuki had been haphazard, and Home Ministry officials thought the time had come to tighten and perhaps change the censorship framework. The ministry had declared its intention to exercise "vigorous control over wartime media" in early 1938, a few months after the China Incident

Fig. 4.5. "National Pride Dancers" rousted from their Kyōbashi entertainment haunts undergo military drill in Tokyo. They have exchanged frivolous dancing costumes for military uniforms, marching packs, and regular issue rifles. (From Mainichi Shinbunsha, ed., *Shashin Shōwa sanjūnen shi*)

had begun. Over the succeeding year and a half, some half-hearted results had been achieved.[22] Police closed many taxi-dance halls.[23] As part of the government's culture war (*bunka sensō*), young women who fancied Western clothing and permanent waves were branded "females of idiot beauty" (*hakuchibiteki na onna*) and advised to become "feminine females" (*onna rashii onna*).[24] Groups of dancers were persuaded to join paramilitary training units to restore a sense of discipline (Fig. 4.5). When dance halls reopened, police registered taxi dance customers and set earlier closing hours for geisha houses and brothels. "Harsh restrictions are necessary," police said, "in order to strengthen citizens' consciousness of the fighting for Kankō (Hankou)."[25] Trying to protect the purity of youth, officials advised girl students and young women in Kyoto and Osaka to avoid private meetings with "foreigners, entertainers, and sportsmen."[26] Censorship continued to be sporadic and unpredictable. To cite one example from 1939, the Combined New and Old Drama Troupe submitted to the Osaka censor a script based on *The Golden Demon*, an infamously lurid and erotic novel, fully expecting it would be rejected. The censor approved the production without changes for the Kado-za in October.[27]

Officials were aware these were half-hearted measures and largely ineffec-

tive. In 1939, the Home Ministry, the Education Ministry, and the Office of Information began a coordinated effort to develop a more comprehensive form of theater censorship. As Nakamura Kan'emon of the Vanguard Troupe recalled, "beginning in March, censorship interference increased markedly."[28] The Performance Section of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police reported it required deletions in 13 percent of the 228 theater scripts submitted by city theaters in March. At the same time, the Tokyo censors examined nearly one hundred traditional kabuki scripts. A banner headline in the *Miyako* newspaper shouted: "Purge of Stage Dramas: *Benten the Thief* Victimized." For the first time, plays in the traditional kabuki repertory were being asked to "conform with national policy." The Tokyo censor banned two well-known dramas, *Benten the Thief* and *Lord Shihei's Seven Laughs*, because they failed to "reward good and chastise evil" (*kanzen chōaku*) as traditional Confucian morality required. The censor allowed that Kawatake Mokuami's gangster play *Benten the Thief* could be rewritten to convey a proper moral message. The plot of *Lord Shihei's Seven Laughs*, however, was beyond redemption: in the final scene Shihei, a former prince and antihero, reveals his deeply wicked nature through peals of boisterous, bone-chilling laughter. Shōchiku producers dropped both plays from the March program at the Kabuki-za.[29]

Next, censors systematically examined plays in the collection of "Eighteen Famous Kabuki Plays" (*kabuki jūhachiban*) of the Ichikawa Danjūrō acting family, for "even the contents of traditional plays handed down over the generations must be examined for possible revision." Censors noted a problem with *The Subscription List*, even though its hero, Benkei, shows "perfect feudal loyalty."[30] Because the dance-drama is "performed every year," the Metropolitan Police "identified dialogue that should be deleted."[31] When the Vanguard Theater staged *The Subscription List* at the Shinbashi Enbujō in March, the actor playing Benkei was informed he could not speak an "impious" line that identified an emperor as a man rendered weak by love: "In the Middle Ages there once lived an emperor whose name was Shomu. Having lost his beloved wife, his grief became too much for him to bear. The tears flowered from his eyes in a continuous chain; his cheeks were never dry. To aid her advance as a bodhisattva, he then built in her memory the great Rushana Buddha."[32] In a few days, the Ichikawa family head (*sōke*) wrote a substitute line that was then included in the Vanguard performance: "In the Middle Ages there lived [an emperor] who revered the Three Treasures and felt compassion toward mankind. In order to bring peace to the world and stability to the realm, he built the Rushana Buddha while in the thrall of holy inspiration." Excess love for a woman showed weakness; following a sacred vision was noble. It was a

Fig. 4.6. French rouge advertisement. In the early 1930s, the emancipated, independent "modern girl" (*moga*) marcelled her hair and wore "French rouge popular in the West," dressed in a "Spring Fashion" *meisen* silk kimono woven in bold Art Deco patterns (see Fig. 4.7), and joined male dandies in smoking sophisticated factory-rolled cigarettes (see Fig. 4.8). After 1939 these chic fashions were denounced for their Western taint. (From *Asahi shinbun*, March 10, 1932)

Fig. 4.7. Art Deco pattern kimono advertisement. (From *Ashahi shinbun*, March 7, 1932)

time when the Vanguard Theater was veering to the right. Kan'emon wryly notes that after this the troupe included standard government slogans in its printed programs: "Mobilize National Spirit," "Loyalty and Patriotism," "National Unity," and "Untiring Perseverance."[33]

Acting on its own initiative, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police announced that its office would exercise stricter control over live theater after May 15. Under the headline "Play Script Censorship Is Lenient, Police to View Stage Rehearsals," a news report explained that an actor's vocal intonation and gesture could alter the meaning of a scene. Therefore an Observation Squad would be set up within the Performance Section of the Peace Preservation Department. Its members would attend stage rehearsals and initiate immediate censorship correction.[34] As a consequence, hereafter police were able to censor a theater

Fig. 4.8. Cigarette advertisement. (From *Ashahi shinbun*, March 9, 1932)

performance three times: when a script was submitted for censorship, during rehearsal, and during performance.

Western individualism, apparent in commercial advertising in 1932, disappeared by 1939, largely in response to changed public opinion. Newspaper ads in 1932 had flaunted chic images of rebellious flappers, or *moga,* to sell French rouge, "Spring Fashion" Art Deco kimonos, and new factory-rolled cigarettes (Figs. 4.6, 4.7, 4.8). In 1939 department store publicists had taken to touting somber "Indigo-Dyed Fabrics for Spring" at the behest of the Japan Association for the Regulation of Apparel.[35] And no longer seen in 1939 were romance magazines with their titillating stories — "A Married Woman Finally Climaxes," "Poisoned Lipstick Hell," and "Seventeen Girls' Fabulous Chests" — that had been advertised in 1932.[36]

In this repressive atmosphere, Shōchiku and Tōhō officials conferred at length with the police in an attempt to agree on a proper course for wartime theater. In the end, the "voluntary" talks produced only the pious observation that plays and films must "extol patriotic ideals" and agreement that frivolous entertainment "is contrary to the emergency situation."[37] These were hardly earth-shaking conclusions.

Toward a Theater Law

These measures were seen as stopgaps until a formal Theater Law (Engeki Hō) could be enacted by the Diet. In March the Home Ministry Public Security Division finally drafted a proposal to address major theater issues. It proposed six theater initiatives designed to purify (*jōka*), regulate (*tōsei*), and censor (*ken'etsu*) stage entertainment. The initiatives were partly based on a new Film Law (Eiga Hō) enacted by the Diet, giving government agencies extensive control over most aspects of film production and distribution.[38] In brief, the theater initiatives were:

In villages, promote theater, keep ticket prices low, and purify play content.
Promote touring drama to fortify National Spirit (*kokumin seishin*).
Strive to preserve kabuki and purify modern drama (*shingeki*).
Unify the system of play script censorship.
Build national or public theaters.
Establish a theater academy for playwriting, directing, acting, and scene design.[39]

The initiatives were presented to a Theater Conference with the expectation that a draft of a Theater Law would emerge in its report. Although the conference did not advocate a Theater Law, the plan's six goals are worth examining. The first two goals, linked together, became an article of faith among many government officials and theater experts: theater should reach audiences of every social and economic class and plays should have uplifting themes appropriate to national needs.

These two goals became the keystones of public theater policy for the remainder of the war, in part because they were practical and realizable. If troupes were encouraged to tour towns and villages performing a repertory of government-approved plays, both aims would be accomplished. Successive cabinets supported two organizations to carry out these intertwined tasks. A League of Touring Theaters was charged with sending troupes around the nation (described in Chapter 7). And a Citizens' Drama Movement, organized the previous year by Iizuka Tomoichirō, promoted new and timely plays. These can be called statist, fascist, or socialist goals. Their implementation set important government agencies in direct and indirect opposition to existing capitalist control of professional theater.

The third goal encompassed two opposite aims: the native Japanese theater art, kabuki, was to be "protected" through preservation while the wayward,

foreign theater form, *shingeki*, was to be "purified" of its undesirable elements. But the government did not act aggressively in either case. On one hand, authorities took no specific steps to protect kabuki. To the contrary, provisions in government decrees and regulations soon harmed and restricted kabuki. And on the other hand, within a year government authorities mounted a ferocious attack on leftist, progressive *shingeki* that essentially destroyed modern drama for the rest of the war. Goals five and six were budget busting, pie-in-the-sky dreams that had no hope of being funded. Perhaps Home Ministry officials included them as sops to gain theater artists' and scholars' support for the overall package. In any case, officials did not develop specific plans to construct national theaters or a theater academy. And funds to build them were never requested.[40]

Goal four envisioned a unified, national system of play censorship. This elusive target, as we will see, occupied the attention of Home Ministry Special Higher Police and Office of Information officials for the next five years, until the war was over. Kabuki had always been subject to government control, and it mattered little to kabuki artists whether censorship authority was centralized or dispersed.

Advocates of Citizens' Drama joyfully welcomed the proposed theater law—especially provisions that protected kabuki from Western contamination and strengthened censorship "guidance" of theater. Professor Ōyama Isao of Waseda University wrote extensively on the theory of Citizens' Drama. In a 1939 article "Japanism in the Theater," he staked out the extreme position that a new theater of Japanism was needed because all existing theater forms in Japan were corrupt:

> Kabuki, *shinpa*, *shingeki*, light drama . . . offer ordinary people decadent, unwholesome entertainment that is overly feudalistic, infected with the sick ideas of liberalism, poisoned by capitalist commercialism, and whose ideology leads in most cases to a corrupt world of crudeness and vulgarity. Or else the theater exists simply to play the fool, to be the professional jester to the propertied classes of the great cities.[41]

In another work he welcomed state control of theater: "[State control] is fine with me. In truth, Japanese theater is a prodigal son, long allowed to get away with murder. It is too much controlled by the ideas of capitalist liberalism. If suitable restrictions and proper guidance are not applied now, our theater, so difficult to rescue for so long, will never rise from its swamp of vulgarity and filth."[42] Ōyama argued that the problem with kabuki was not that its repertory is bad (which it is), but that Western theories of art and culture have not been

Fig. 4.9. Members of the "Greater Japan Women's Patriotic Society" in Nagano Prefecture wrap and address food packages for sons and husbands fighting in China in 1939. (Photo Zöe Kincaid collection, courtesy Earle Ernst and James R. Brandon)

swept away, and the capitalist management system is deaf to criticism. One can almost see Ōyama gloating: "The sooner concerned authorities establish control over our theater culture, the happier I will be."[43]

A Culture of War on the Home Front

By the end of 1939, many early features of wartime domestic control had fallen into place.[44] Still two years before Pearl Harbor, government officials regularly cited wartime (*senji*) conditions as the reason to control and guide arts and cultural expression. Direct government control took multiple forms. Kabuki patrons now paid a new 10 percent China Incident Admission Tax that would rise to 200 percent by the war's end.[45] New theater construction was banned for a second year as a measure to conserve raw materials that were needed to support the troops in the field.[46]

Shōchiku closed its theaters in Kyoto to honor Asian Development Day, July 7, sending its employees to Shimogamo Shrine to pray for "eternal military victories."[47] Theater producers in Osaka voluntarily (*jihatsuteki*) reduced advertising "in conformity with the current situation" (*jikyoku taiō*).[48] The Kabuki-za closed from July 18 to 21 for air raid defense drills.[49] In order to conserve electric power for military use, in November five Kansai theaters voluntarily suspended matinee performances one Saturday each month.[50] In

December, the Kyoto Spiritual Mobilization and Peace Preservation offices advised that, "while Christian church services are allowed, retail stores and commercial enterprises should voluntarily refrain from Christmas-theme advertising."[51] And at year-end censors announced they had suppressed 2,320 foreign publications, mostly books concerning economics, politics, and social thought (*shakai shisō*).[52]

Throughout society, groups of all stripes were mobilizing for a long war (Fig. 4.9). Kabuki had, to date, almost entirely benefited from the war, but in the waning days of the year, shocking news shattered the protected world of kabuki: on December 22, 1939, actor Nakamura Shōkei was killed fighting in China. He was twenty, the son of kabuki actor Nakamura Jakuemon III, and related to many important kabuki families. His death brought home to the tightly intermarried world of kabuki a grim reminder that someone had to pay the cost of Japan's war victories. There was no reason to expect that kabuki would escape unscathed from a lengthening conflict.

PART TWO

Fruits of Victory | 1940 – 1942

Civilians raised funds to buy ships, tanks, and aircraft in support of Japan's all-out war. Japan Actors' Association chairman and vice chairman, Ichimura Uzaemon XV (right) and Onoe Kikugorō VI (left), in formal cutaways, present to the navy a Zero fighter, "Patriot 546 — the Actor's Wings," Haneda Airfield, November 1941. (From *Engei gahō*, January 1942)

CHAPTER FIVE

Kabuki and 2,600 Years of Imperial Rule | 1940

Eight corners of the world under one roof.
— Ideological slogan, 1940

We in the present offer felicitous prayers to our imperial sovereign of the past who founded this shining nation, bathed in the brilliant light of Amaterasu Omikami, Goddess of the Eastern Ocean.
— *Our Eight Great Nations*, kabuki play, 1940

The year 1940 marked a watershed for kabuki in wartime Japan. Throughout the year, the kabuki world joined the entire nation in celebrating a New Order in Japan and the 2,600th anniversary of the founding of the imperial line. Across the ocean, Japan's ally Germany stood astride all of Europe save Britain. There was good reason for the public to feel optimistic.

In 1940, the second cabinet of Prince Konoe Fumimaro took important steps to further militarize society and the economy. In the summer and autumn, Konoe promoted a New Order (Shintaisei) of domestic politics, largely devised by intellectuals in the prime minister's private think tank, the Shōwa Research Association.[1] Under the New Order, imperial subjects were exhorted to serve a "Japanese form of one nation, one party."[2] All existing political parties "voluntarily" dissolved themselves, replaced by a single authorized political body, the ultranationalist Imperial Rule Assistance Association. To some extent the association mirrored the Nazi and Fascist state parties of German and Italy.[3] The immediate aims of the Association in 1940 were to promote reverence for the imperial nation (*kokutai*) and suppress any dissent from belief in the emperor's divinity.[4] In August, the Konoe cabinet accepted Army Minister Tōjō Hideki's secret plan to "include the English, French, Dutch and Portuguese islands of the Orient within the substance of the New Order" (omitting for the moment the Philippines), thus moving closer to a Pacific War.[5] In September, Konoe took the fateful step of choosing the wrong side in the great world conflict. In

Fig. 5.1. A hugely satisfied Chancellor Adolf Hitler strides from the Tripartite Pact signing in Berlin, September 27, 1940, flanked by cosigners Ambassador Kurusu Saburō of Japan and Count Galeazzo Ciano, Italian foreign minister. (From Mainichi Shinbunsha, ed., *Shashin Shōwa sanjūnen shi*)

Berlin, Special Envoy Kurusu Saburō signed the Tripartite Pact with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy (Fig. 5.1). The emperor observed tellingly that Japan's Axis partners were "nations which share the same intentions with us."[6] A Nazi propagandist explained that Germany's pact with Japan was a spiritual enterprise: ". . . we National Socialists also put the spirit over the material. The Axis Pact that ties us to Japan is not a treaty of political convenience. . . . The Berlin-Rome-Tokyo alliance is a worldwide spiritual program. . . . It is defeating the international alliance of convenience of Anglo-Saxon imperialist monopolists and unlimited Bolshevist internationalism."[7] Tokyo policymakers shared with their Axis compatriots the basic aim of replacing with "spiritual power" the crass materialism that underlay both capitalism and communism.

Naturally theater owners and producers extended their welcome to representatives of the Third Reich. Within a month, Shōchiku invited visiting Hitler Youth delegates to savor Japanese spiritual culture at the Kabuki-za (Fig. 5.2).

Fig. 5.2. In November 1940, as part of the celebration of 2,600 years of imperial rule, Shōchiku invited Hitler Youth delegates backstage at the Kabuki-za. They were met by (right to left) Japan Actors' Association chair Ichimura Uzaemon XV (in suit) and young actors Ichimura Uzaemon XVI, Ichimura Uzaemon XVII (rear), Onoe Baikō VII, Onoe Shōroku II, and Nakamura Utaemon VI (kneeling). (From *Engei gahō*, December 1940)

As Peter High notes, this carefully selected group of "blond, blue-eyed youths succeeded in winning the affection of the nation."[8] Plays, musicals, and revues praised the achievements of the Nazi and Fascist states (Fig. 5.3).

When France fell to German armies in June 1940, the Japanese government began its incremental Southern Advance into Asia without fear of European opposition. Immediately, Prince Konoe's cabinet approved "expansion into Southeast Asia," including "the invasion of Singapore and the seizure of oil fields in the Netherlands East Indies."[9] In September, the Shōwa emperor directed the Imperial Army to enter northern Indochina in line with "the great principal of eight corners of the world under one roof (*hakkō ichi'u*) [that] is the teaching of Our Imperial ancestors."[10] Presaging this action, earlier in the year at the Kabuki-za, Kikugorō VI had led a top-flight kabuki cast in Oka Onitarō's four-act drama *Our Eight Great Nations*. This elegant dance-drama used the mythological concept of Japan as "eight islands" under imperial rule to suggest that Japan's conquests of Formosa, Korea, Manchuria, and north China were divinely inspired.[11] Dance lyrics in the final scene exalt the myth of imperial ancestry:

NICHIGEKI STAGE SHOW
"HEIL HITLER"
By Nichigeki Dancing Team
Below left: Miss Akemi Shirogane
right: Miss Chizuko Osabe
"Heil Hitler" is a musical stage show presented by the Nichigeki Dancing Team in hearty welcome to the Hitler Jugend.
Features on the program include German rural dances, knights of Tannhauser, a kineorama of the scenic Rhine, ballet "Blue Danube" commemorating the German-Austrian anschluss, visit of the Zeppelin to Japan, dances taken from Grimm's fairy tales and a grand finale in which a goodwill party of Japanese girls is given an enthusiastic welcome in Berlin.
TOKIO JAPAN
NIPPON GEKIJO
PRINCIPAL THEATRE OF TOHO CHAIN

Fig. 5.3. *Heil Hitler*, a musical revue by the Nichigeki Dancing Team, staged "in hearty welcome to the Hitler Jugend (Hitler Youth)," produced by Tōhō, Nippon Gekijō, Tokyo, September 1938. Scenes included German rural dances, the knights of Tannhauser, the Rhine River on film, a ballet *Blue Danube* honoring the German-Austrian *anschluss,* the Zeppelin arriving in Japan, and a finale featuring Japanese girls dancing in Berlin. (Courtesy John J. Stephan, from *Japan Times & Advertiser*, September 6, 1938)

SONG: We in the present offer felicitous prayers to our imperial sovereign of the past who founded this shining nation, bathed in the brilliant light of Amaterasu Omikami, Goddess of the Eastern Ocean. . . .
CHORUS: A realm of 2,600 years.
SONG: Extending o'er the depths of the Four Seas, emperor and subjects without distinction . . . worshipers' prayers for this sacred land are eternal, like the Many-Thousand-Year Pine.
CHORUS: A realm of 2,600 years.[12]

A commentator explained that Japan's Asian policy of "eight corners of the world under one roof" was entirely benevolent: "[The phrase] implies neither Imperialistic aggression nor capitalistic exploitation [but] the formation of one family in which all peoples will be bound together by ties of humanity and morality. This is the ideal which Japan has held dearest from the very beginning of its founding." In the event that Japan's aims were opposed, however, a different face of Japanese policy was revealed: "Those who refuse to join this family and continue to offer resistance will, however, be destroyed without mercy."[13] Overall, war plays in kabuki and other genres as well showed these two sides of Japanese character: paternalistic benevolence when in control and furious retaliation when thwarted.

Government information policy in 1940 urged sacrifices for the war and at the same time minimized the seriousness of the China conflict. The Home Ministry announced the harsh "Seven-Seven Prohibitions" (Shichi Shichi Kinrei), so called because they were issued on July 7, designed to eliminate luxurious (Western-derived) living.[14] For the sake of the war, citizens were expected to abandon silk clothing, necktie pins, gold and silver jewelry, necklaces, and lace.[15] Article 1 of a Ministry of Industry regulation forbad the manufacture of "luxury goods" after July 7 and their sale after October 7.[16] In September, a *Yomiuri* newspaper reporter observed that a carnival atmosphere prevailed in Tokyo's downtown shopping district in anticipation of the October ban. Throngs of young people wearing fashionable Western clothes and wives in stylish hairdos were snapping up diamonds, gold, and expensive imported watches, in effect converting cash into property in preparation for a time of austerity that lay ahead. After October 7, policemen and squads of Imperial Rule Assistance Association members took to the streets on the lookout for citizens wearing illegal finery or displaying Western fashions (Fig. 5.4).[17] Exhortations against excessive consumption were widely publicized by the Office of Information: "Luxury Is the Enemy," "Extravagance: Not Needed, Not Urgent," "Farewell Luxury Goods!" and "The Gate of Vanity Is Closed." In this

Fig. 5.4. A policeman, dressed in summer white uniform, publicly reprimands young women for their frivolous, selfish, "un-Japanese" permanent waves. (From Mainichi Shinbunsha, ed., *Shashin Shōwa sanjūnen shi*)

atmosphere, scenes of hedonistic living were quickly cut from films and plays, either by producers as self-censorship or by police censors in the Home Ministry. It was widely rumored that the luxurious lifestyle of kabuki stars would be the target of the "Seven-Seven Prohibitions" in the future.[18]

At the same time, *Engei gahō* ran a series of jaunty human-interest stories in 1940 about young kabuki actors in the army. The blithe, insouciant tone of the articles implied that the China Incident presented no serious problem for Japanese soldiers. Onoe Shōroku II cheerfully counted his army service during 1938–1939 as exactly "one year, three months, and eighteen days." Acting and soldiering were a lot alike, he joked: "You train hard and many people are at the bottom and a few are at the top." Back home the attitude "oh, is there a war on?" was irksome, but Shōroku was happy to be acting again because, he chuckled, he was quite hopeless as a soldier.[19] Kataoka Ichizō V was home from the Mongolian border, where his army unit had fought in the disastrous 1939 Nomohan Incident, in which Russian armored units badly mauled ill-equipped Japanese forces (a foretaste of bitter Japanese defeats to come).[20] Now that Ichizō was back in Tokyo, he rhapsodized that his greatest pleasure in life was "watching beautifully dressed women stroll down the Ginza."[21] Nakamura

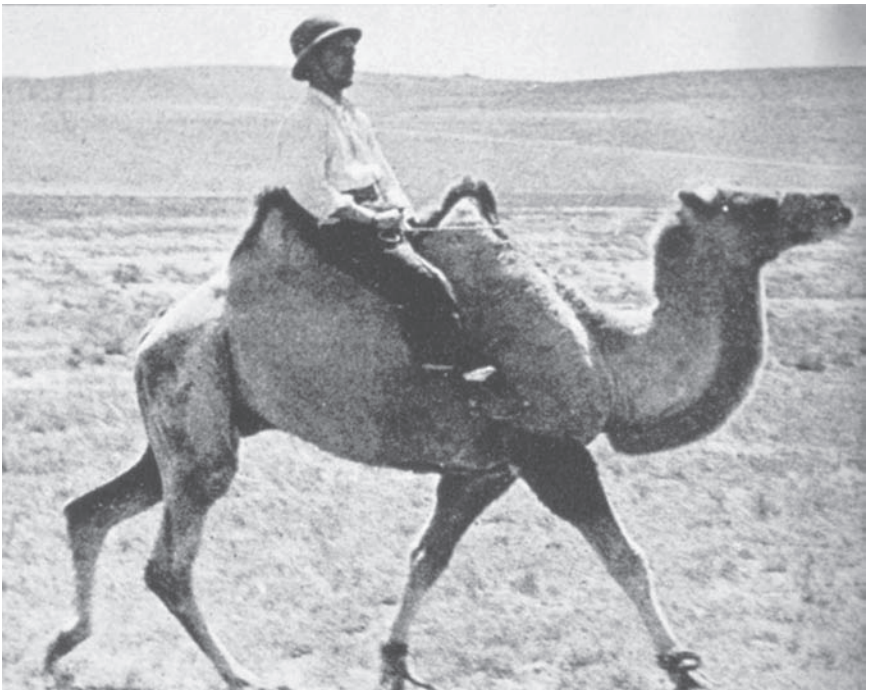


Fig. 5.5. In 1938, young kabuki actor Bandō Mitsugorō VIII rides a camel on the open steppes of Mongolia during an adventurous theater study tour of mainland Asia. (From *Engei gahō*, September 1938)

Kanzaburō XVII gossiped that he was leading a pleasant life in Tokyo after a year spent soldiering in Manchuria and Korea: "I've been receiving my full salary from Tōhō for the past six months but haven't stepped on a stage. Every morning I wake up and wonder what I should do that day."[22]

Two years earlier, *Engei gahō* had run a long article by kabuki actor Bandō Mitsugorō VIII, then thirty-two years old, about his solo jaunt through remote regions of north China and Mongolia, giving occasional performances. Photographs show him in exotic and adventurous, but not dangerous, situations (Fig. 5.5). Casually he rides a camel in the distant desert, visits and stays with Mongol herders, and jokes with a squad of Japanese soldiers he encounters on the front lines. All the time, Mitsugorō is outfitted in pith helmet and puttees, a copy of the Western colonialist's de rigueur costume. The image of Mitsugorō posed in a destroyed section of China's Great Wall carries the iconic significance of a casual conqueror. When he did not encounter a single theater troupe from Japan during his travels in the back country, he vowed: "I will form a touring company, travel with nothing but a backpack, and bring

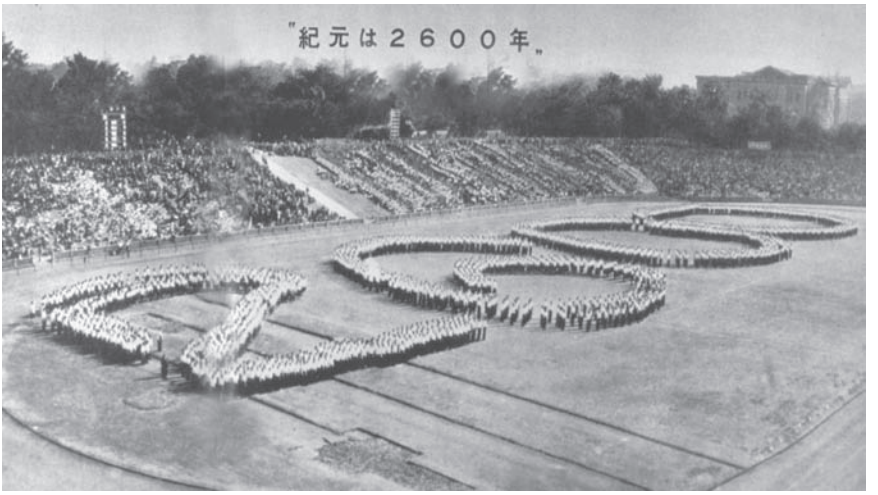


Fig. 5.6. School children form the number "2600" in Meiji Stadium, Tokyo, May 1, 1940, to celebrate 2,600 years of continuous imperial rule. Such mass ceremonies were influenced by the mass spectacles staged by the Nazi Party in Germany in the 1930s. (From Mainichi Shinbunsha, ed., *Shashin Shōwa sanjūnen shi*)

consolation performances" to isolated Japanese troops fighting in China.[23] It is notable that none of the young actors featured in *Engei gahō* said anything about dying for the emperor or defeating the enemy.

Kabuki Celebrates 2,600 Years of Imperial Rule

In 1940, the kabuki world eagerly participated in many of the 15,000 events designed to celebrate 2,600 years of unbroken imperial rule, the imperial line having been established by the mythical Emperor Jinmu in 660 BC (Fig. 5.6). *Engei gahō* opened the year by publishing a special section, "National History Plays Featuring the Japanese Spirit," that identified 157 plays whose heroes were models of military courage or political fealty.[24] Throughout 1940, Shōchiku publicists proclaimed the virtues of "Patriotism, Loyalty, Duty, Public Service, and Self Abjuration" on inside covers of Kabuki-za programs.[25]

The yearlong festivities proved an irresistable lure for playwrights and actors to shine in the public eye doing plays linked to the nation's religio-imperial origins. One organizing frame for new plays was a "Performing Arts Festival Celebrating Two Thousand Six Hundred Years of Imperial Rule" that was the brainchild of the Office of Information. Some unusual kabuki plays in the festival revisited nativist Shinto myths in order to glorify the nation's mystical origins. *The Heavenly Cave Door,* recommended by the Japan Central

Fig. 5.7. *The Heavenly Cave Door* at the Ōsaka Kabuki-za, February 1940, featured the lively dance of Ame-no-Uzume (Nakamura Baigyoku III) that lured the Sun Goddess Amaterasu from a cave, thus restoring light to the world, a parallel to Japan bringing light to Asia. (From *Engei gahō*, March 1940)

League of Culture, was staged simultaneously at the Minami-za in Kyoto and the Ōsaka Kabuki-za in February (Fig. 5.7). The dance play featured the legendary performance of Ame-no-Uzume that lured the Sun Goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami from her cave, thereby returning light to the world.[26] Clearly the play was intended to suggest that in 1940 Japan was bringing the light of civilization to China. The stage announcement (*kōjō*) in Osaka explicitly tied the program to Japan's Asian political aims: "The 2,600th anniversary of the imperial founding marks a time when the entire nation must devote itself to the great task of constructing a bright New East Asia. All the more, we realize the importance of our cultural mission, and we promise wholesome dramatic content."[27] We can see that the liberation of Asia from Western cultural and political domination was a theme of popular discourse a year and a half before December 8, 1941.

Several festival entries staged at the Minami-za in Kyoto were traditional plays said to exemplify unique spiritual qualities of the Japanese race. Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *The Battles of Coxinga*, subtitled *A Chinese Father and*

a Japanese Mother, is set in the seventeenth century. Coxinga, who is half-Japanese, defeats enemies of the Chinese emperor and restores benevolent rule to China. The meaning of the play was given in a program note: "This much-praised cultural masterpiece shows that the rescue of China is true to Japan's nature." *Shunkan's Exile*, another famous Chikamatsu drama, was characterized as "a masterpiece that overflows with Japanese Spirit."[28] At the Ōsaka Kabuki-za in October, the Japan Central League of Culture sponsored *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* as part of the Performing Arts Festival. Through the play's subtitle, Shōchiku publicists linked this two-century-old kabuki masterpiece to citizens' wartime duties: *Let All Citizens Learn True Japanese Spirit, the Flower of Kansai Kabuki*.[29]

New-History Plays in the Sacred Year

The largest number of original kabuki contributions to the Performing Arts Festival were new-history plays. The rise and fall of Toyotomi Hideyoshi in the late sixteenth century continued to fascinate playwrights. *The Morning We Depart for War* at the Kabuki-za in December was an Imperial Rule Performing Arts Festival entry sponsored by the Japan Central League of Culture. The great stars Matsumoto Kōshirō VII and Nakamura Kichiemon I played Toyotomi Hideyoshi and Tokugawa Ieyasu. Author-director Yoshida Genjirō dramatized Hideyoshi's decision in 1597 to continue Japan's disastrous invasion of Korea and China, then in its sixth year. Bolstered by inflated reports that Admiral Tōdō Takatora has "sunk 160 enemy ships" and General Katō Kiyomasa has "taken 38,000 enemy heads," Hideyoshi dispatches another 175,000 mounted samurai to invade the continent. The parallel to Japan in the twentieth century sending off army division after army division to conquer China is clear (and in both cases Japanese troops failed). According to a program note, "This new play by Yoshida Genjirō vividly depicts a spirit of heightened imperial dignity and a spirit of loyalty to the emperor."[30] However, when Ōyama Isao applied the standards of Citizens' Drama to the play, he reached a different conclusion: the production "ended in massive failure" marred by "lifeless Grand Kabuki acting" and overelaborated "art for art's sake" stage settings. Ōyama exposed the play's irredeemable fault in a rhetorical question that he gleefully answered himself: the play was insufficiently "Japanese": "Do the playwright's thoughts perceptively penetrate a world-view that is 'absolute in Japaneseness' (*Nihonteki zentaishugi*)? That is, does it express our ethnic ideology (*minshu ideorogii*)? No. There is no other word for it but no."[31]

In *The Tale of Regent Hideyoshi*, parts 1, 2, and 3, Kaneko Yōbun wrote and

directed dramatizations of three sections of Yoshikawa Eiji's massive popular novel of the same title, thus placing the self-made master of Japan, Hideyoshi, center stage at the Kabuki-za in February, June, and December of the sacred year.[32] And Nagata Kōkichi's *An Enemy Nation Surrenders*, staged at the Kabuki-za in November, included impressive scenes of the Mongol fleet invading Kyushu in 1281 and the fleet's destruction by Ise Shrine's Divine Wind (*shinpu* or kamikaze).[33] Audiences must have tingled with pleasure witnessing this impressive historical conflict. But a reviewer rudely dismissed Nagata's grand imperial vision: "The play itself is merely a pageant, a series of tableaux to display the actors, there being no dramatic values or conflict."[34]

Four new-history plays produced during the sacred year are noteworthy for drawing direct parallels between Japan's clash with foreign powers in the early Meiji period and Japan's confrontation with America, Britain, and the Netherlands in 1940. The Japan Central League of Culture contributed a Performing Arts Festival grand prize for the "best new kabuki drama." The winning entry was Hirata Kōichi's *Record of a Steamship at Hakodate*, a "true and unaltered history" of Japanese settlement of Kamchatka and islands north of Hokkaido in the nineteenth century. The play opens with American, French, and English ships blockading the port of Hakodate "in violation of international law."

Fujishiro, a young naval cadet, is shot by Hijikata, a former samurai, during an argument over the proper course for settlement. As Fujishiro lies near death, he sternly admonishes his assailant, "You are of the old Tokugawa order that will soon be extinguished." Fujishiro urges his comrades to ignore mines sewn by Western ships. We have had use of the Western-style sailing ships, he points out, since shipwright Tsuzuki Toyoji successfully replicated their design a decade before. But now Japan has a modern steamship (*karinsen*) in the port of Hakodate that can break the foreign blockade and explore Japan's northern territories.

> FUJISHIRO: Use this new steamship for the benefit of a new Japan. . . . Today we are not samurai, or farmers, or merchants. We are all proud to be . . . Japanese. . . . The time will surely come when we face the power of foreigners . . . and then we must rise against them. (*Agonized, he gasps for breath.*) In our nation's time of trouble . . . set aside the discord of factions . . . steam north in this powerful steamship to Etorov, to Kamchatka. . . . Fly to the outermost reaches of the northern seas . . . for true peace . . . for civilization . . . for a New Japan.[35]

The parallels to the 1940s are evident: Japan must stand up to bullying Western powers, territorial expansion is a good thing, citizens should forget differ-

ences in order to build a self-reliant new Japan, our struggle is just, and our aim is peace.

Kansai's rabble-rousing playwright Gōda Toku was happy to turn out three plays about the founding of the imperial Meiji state to celebrate the birth of the Japanese nation. Gōda fashioned a powerful denunciation of Western arrogance for a January program at the Naka-za advertised as "A Great Springtime Picture Scroll of Nationalist Kabuki Embracing Four Years of Sacred War."[36] In *The Kobe Incident*, the playwright dramatized a minor but historically significant clash between Japanese and Western forces in Kobe in 1868, the first year of the Meiji era. In Gōda's telling, in January of that year, samurai Taki Zenzaburō (Bandō Jusaburō III) killed a foreigner who imprudently blocked the passage of Zenzaburō's lord on a public thoroughfare. French and American forces bombarded Kobe, occupied the city, and demanded Zenzaburō's execution. When Zenzaburō is told that the incident "is causing anxiety in the emperor's heart," Zenzaburō willingly commits seppuku to meet foreign demands. Diplomatic representatives of Britain, the United States, France, and Holland insist on personally verifying Zenzaburō's death.[37] Consequently, Zenzaburō's self-immolation at Eifuku Temple was the first ritual suicide that any Westerner had witnessed. Gōda contrasted the cruel, unfeeling behavior of the European observers unfavorably with Zenzaburō's quiet composure and samurai dignity.

For the May program at the Kado-za, Gōda provided *Spearhead of the Imperial Forces*, another Performing Arts Festival entry sponsored by the Japan Central League of Culture. Shōchiku publicists bragged: "It is Shōchiku's new style of Kansai play manifesting the true intent of Japanese Spirit." Mainline Kansai actors Nakamura Ganjirō II, Jitsukawa Yaozō III, Nakamura Fukusuke V, Nakamura Tomijūrō IV, and Kataoka Nizaemon XIII played patriotic citizen soldiers who banded together as the Divine Punishment Group (Tenchū Gumi). Members rose in revolt against forces of the Tokugawa Shogunate in August 1863, leading the way to Tokugawa defeat and installation of the Meiji emperor five years later.[38]

All Citizens Are Soldiers on the December program at the Naka-za was recommended by the Central Military District Information Office. A formal stage announcement explained to audiences that "*All Citizens Are Soldiers* manifests Japanese Spirit . . . through tears of blood."[39] Gōda's major character is Ōmura Masujirō, the first minister of war in the Meiji period, who famously instituted far-sighted policies that created Japan's modern army of drafted citizens. Ōmura lies dying of an assassin's wound. Just before his death, he learns that the citizen army he championed, composed of ordinary farmers

and city workers, has defeated the shogun's professional samurai in the Battle of Ueno (1868). Ōmura justifies a citizens' army by pointing to Western attacks on the Chōshū fief in 1864, and the playwright intended the audience to link that experience to the "ABCD encirclement of Japan" in 1940:[40]

> OMURA: From now on there will be war. When warships of the four powers — America, Britain, France, and Holland — assaulted our Chōshū land, who took up rifles and swords to confront our country's crisis? It was the people of Chōshū — farmers and merchants, priests and students. We cannot leave war to samurai professionals! . . . Though our nation may be burned and destroyed, we will protect our land. Every person who is born in Japan must be a guardian soldier! Men, women, the old, even children. Here lies the truth of Ōmura's reformed military system. All citizens are soldiers![41]

The story of the heroic birth of Japan's mighty Imperial Army struck a powerful chord in the hearts of spectators in 1940. At that time, spectators could not have realized the prophetic nature of Ōmura's call to arms: within five years every Japanese citizen, old and young, including school children, would be called on to die in Japan's defense. *All Citizens Are Soldiers* was one of the most popular plays of the war years: between 1940 and 1945, six productions were mounted in Osaka, Kyoto, Kobe, and Tokyo with casts of both Kansai and Tokyo actors.[42]

Yet Gōda's script and the acting of leading roles drew harsh condemnation for depicting samurai behavior in an un-Japanese manner. Here are excerpts from a long review by critic Kitabayashi Yoshiko published in *Engei gahō*:

> It must be said *All Citizens Are Soldiers* is well suited to the times. Yet I have two or three concerns about the script. First, in the attempt to show Ōmura's human side, he reacts much too openly with colleagues and friends so that Ōmura Masujirō disappears as a Japanese and disappears as a samurai. . . . His nature as a human being is not only stifled, it reeks of the West (*bata kusai*) until it becomes offensive. . . . Then the character Shingū Jūzō weeps too openly. . . . Perhaps it is the fault of [Sawamura] Tosshi's bad acting . . . but in the final scene he embraces the corpse of Ōmura, sobbing and wailing uncontrollably. This may be Shakespearian, but . . . the Way of the Samurai is to suppress emotion. Isn't giving way to easy tears a modern behavior taken from the West? . . . What has become of the Japanese Spirit of old?[43]

Kabuki Overnight Pickle Plays in the Sacred Year

Finally, the anniversary celebrations offered a supportive milieu for new overnight pickle plays written in praise of Japan's New Order on the Asian mainland. *Breaking Dawn*, subtitled *The Epic Tale of Japan and Manchuria's Friendly Nation Founding,* was the featured play at the Kabuki-za in August 1940. Sponsored by the new Ministry for Colonies and the Manchurian Embassy in honor of the seventh anniversary of the founding of the Manchurian puppet state,[44] the play illustrates the contradictions in Japan's Asian policy. On one hand the play tries to show that Japan and Manchuria are equal partners. Guidance Officer Tanaka (Sawamura Tosshi VIII) and State Counselor Oka (Ichikawa Jukai III) have struggled to bring a "paradise of benevolent rule" to the inhabitants of Tōzan Prefecture (Dongshan Xian).[45] A stage photo shows Tanaka shaking hands as equals with the Chinese "bandit warlord" Otetsuzan (Ichikawa Ennosuke) (Fig. 5.8). Tanaka has just appointed Ōtetsuzan Director of National Security for the Manchurian nation.[46] On the other hand, it is clear that Japanese characters possess a superior morality that other Asians cannot emulate, certainly not Chinese. When Hōran, a female Chinese secretary played by "Manchurian" actress-singer Ri Kōran, accuses Guidance Officer Tanaka of duplicity, he offers to kill himself by seppuku. Such a pure action cannot be questioned, and Hōran apologizes (Fig. 5.9). Kawaguchi's drama does not resolve these two opposing positions (equality of Asian races and Japanese cultural superiority), nor were they resolved in real life.

The plot does not end well. Tanaka is obliged to commit seppuku. Critic Ihara Toshirō noted dryly that "it is overly theatrical when Tanaka kills himself while Hōran sings."[47] *Engei gahō* critic-playwright Ikeda Daigo commended Ri for speaking "excellent Japanese," not knowing that in fact she was Japanese.[48] Ikeda went on to praise the play, but his words have a patronizing ring: "As a tragic tale of the founding of Manchuria, the play is excellent. It is pitiful that Guidance Officer Tanaka, Advisor Oka, and former general Ōsetsuzan all end up dead. Still, nation-building requires human sacrifices, so it can't be helped."[49]

Meanwhile at the Tōkyō Gekijō, Ichikawa Ennosuke II and his troupe staged three new China war plays during the year. In January, Ennosuke played Captain Okuda in *Five Army Scouts*, based on Tasaka Tomotaka's 1938 film of the same title (Fig. 5.10). This tense battlefront drama was said to "depict the affection between an officer and his comrades." Captain Okuda must send a five-man scouting team into perilous forward positions to determine the enemy's strength. Infantrymen commonly said that the most dangerous of all

Fig. 5.8. *Breaking Dawn,* Kabuki-za, August 1940. Japanese Guidance Officer Tanaka Jūichirō (Sawamura Tosshi VIII, left) welcomes former Chinese "bandit leader" Ōtetsuzan (Ichikawa Ennosuke II, right) into Manchurian government service as, of all things, director of public security. (From *Engei gahō*, September 1940)

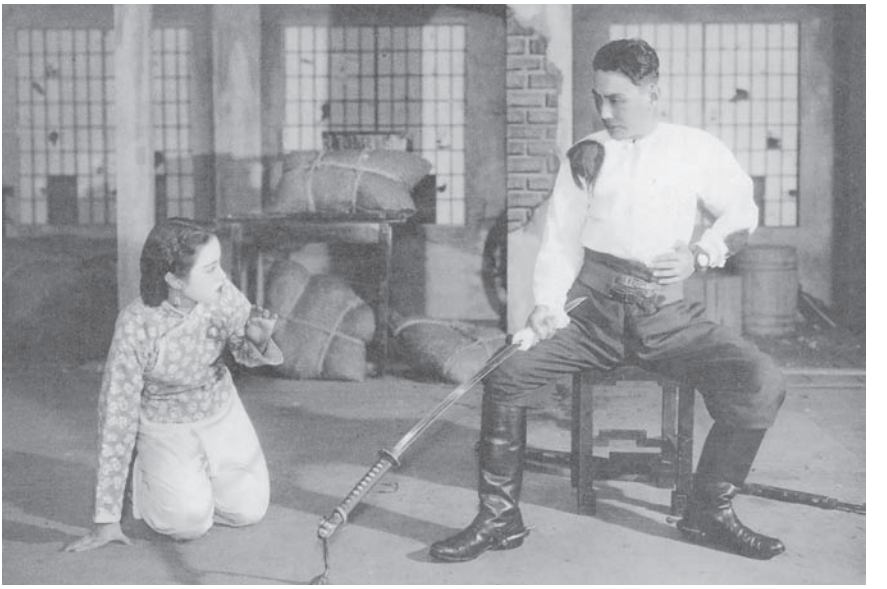


Fig. 5.9. Kawaguchi Matsutarō's *Breaking Dawn,* Kabuki-za, August 1940, sponsored by the Ministry for Colonies and the Manchurian Embassy. Japanese Guidance Officer Tanaka Jūichirō (Sawamura Tosshi VIII) vows to commit seppuku with his long sword when his sincerity is questioned by Hōran, played by "Manchurian" film star Ri Koran (Li Xianglan). (From *Engei gahō*, September 1940)

Fig. 5.10. Six kabuki actors In *Five Army Scouts*, Tōkyō Gekijō, 1940: (right to left) Ichikawa Ennosuke II, as First Lt. Okuda, and enlisted men Sawamura Tosshi VIII, Morita Kanya XIV, Matsumoto Kōmagorō, Ichikawa Danshirō III, and Ichikawa Chūsha VIII. The regular spacing, ramrod straight postures, and general heaviness of the scene is a far cry from the grace, asymmetry, and elegance of traditional kabuki aesthetics. (From *Engei gahō*, February 1940)

military assignments was a scouting mission: "If ten men go out, let one return." In this case, against all odds four scouts return, and then, to everyone's amazement, the fifth man returns as well. The mission is successful because each soldier is resourceful and shows unflinching loyalty to his comrades and to the nation.[50]

Tank Commander Nishizumi, staged in March at the Tōkyō Gekijō, proved to be one of the most admired and influential overnight pickle plays written during the war.[51] It shows men at rest between battles. The play's famous author, novelist-playwright Kikuchi Kan, actively supported the war aims of the government. In 1937–1938, when he was president of the Literary Writers' Association, Kikuchi met with military and Office of Information officials to organize writers into the first Pen Brigades. Under this program, the army and navy brought groups of painters, novelists, journalists, film scenarists, directors, and playwrights to China. They were attached to forward units where they could observe military operations firsthand.[52] Kikuchi was a member of the first Pen Brigade unit, and he wrote *Tank Commander Nishizumi* based on his experiences with the Imperial Army in China.

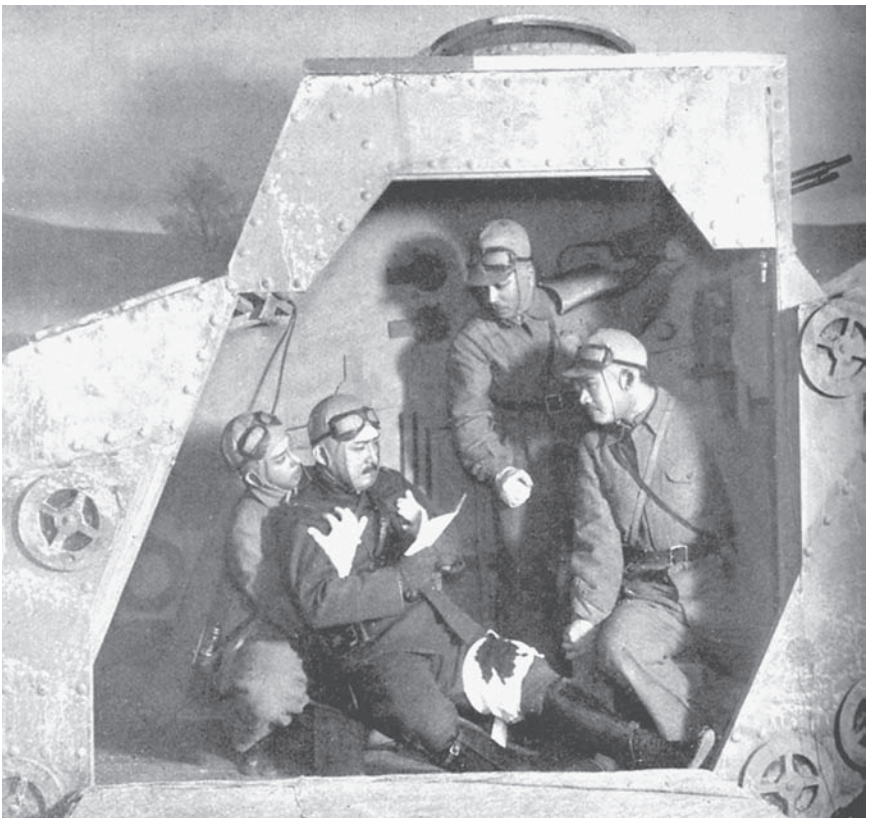


Fig. 5.11. Gravely wounded in his lead tank, Commander Nishizumi (Ichikawa Ennosuke II) gives final instructions before he dies to (from right) Private First Class Satō (Kataoka Ichizō V), Superior Private Tachimatsu (Ichikawa Danshirō III), and Corporal Ida (Morita Kanya XIV) (From *Engei gahō*, April 1940)

Here Kikuchi has chosen to write about a revered officer who died leading the attack on Nanking in December 1937. As with other plays of the time, two opposite ideal aspects of Japanese character are depicted. On one hand, Nishizumi's troops are seen to be humane and generous, sharing food with starving Chinese civilians, as government propaganda claimed. Nishizumi himself tends a newborn infant deserted by its cowardly Chinese mother and father. When the child dies in the intense cold, he and his men provide it with a proper burial. On the other hand, when called to battle, Japanese soldiers are fearless warriors who persevere through every trial and pain in service of the emperor. In the play's conclusion, Nishizumi, wounded and dying, is seen inside his tank. With his final breath, he passes important instructions to his crew (Fig. 5.11).[53]

Fig. 5.12. The Shōchiku film *Legend of Tank Commander Nishizumi,* directed by Yoshimura Kōzaburō, 1940, was modeled in part on Kikuchi Kan's kabuki play. Both film and play emphasize the upright character of Japanese soldiers. (Courtesy Shōchiku Ōtani Library)

The horrors Japanese troops committed during the subsequent conquest of Nanking were unknown to homeland audiences in 1940. Spectators at the time strongly sympathized with Ennosuke's character, knowing that the real Commander Nishizumi "gave his life honorably" during the battle for Nanking.[54] The brave death of Commander Nishizumi was celebrated in articles, songs, and a film based partly on Kikuchi's play (Fig. 5.12).[55] The tank was an important visual symbol of Japanese military dominance over backward China and figured in Bureau of Information propaganda posters and displays (Fig. 5.13).

Pioneers of Asian Development on Tōkyō Gekijō's May program is especially interesting. It garnered the recommendation of the Japan Central League of Culture and was an entry in the Performing Arts Festival. All the major characters in the play are Chinese. This allowed author Kōga Saburō to reasonably debate the war's pros and cons without having a Japanese character speak badly of his own country. Characters advanced two lines of reasoning to show that fair-minded Chinese should not resist Japan (Fig. 5.14). First, Chinese were urged to stop fighting and to give up Chiang Kai-shek's scorched earth policy because continued conflict was harmful to China. The discussion in act 2 between an anti-Japanese official, Jo Shūmei (Xu Xiuming), played by Sawamura

Fig. 5.13. Artist Fujita Tsuguji's conquering tank and soaring airplanes celebrated July 7, 1940, the "Fourth Year of the Sacred War" with China. The masculine images of this war poster, made for the army, proclaim Japan's military dominance over a technologically inferior enemy, China. (Courtesy Tanaka Yuko)

Tosshi VIII, and the play's pro-Japanese spokesman and hero, Professor Wu (Wang), played by Ichikawa Ennosuke II, follows this line of reasoning:

> JO SHŪMEI: Scorched earth is a temporary sacrifice, made for strategic reasons. It can't be helped.
>
> PROFESSOR WU: How can there be victory in the cruel suffering of the people? Everywhere in China, isn't victory far from the people's grasp? Isn't it true that the final victory you dear friends talk about will really mark China's ruin? Of what purpose is a policy of scorched earth? It causes China's destruction and brings desolation to the people. Where is China's prosperity? Indeed, if you truly love China, you must draw back from this evil policy of the Communist Party. The enemy is within us.[56]

In 1940, the Communist Party was portrayed as a greater enemy of Japan than the Nationalist Chinese government.

Second, speech after speech extols the happiness and prosperity that Chinese will enjoy under beneficent Japanese rule. In act 1, Professor Wu interrupts an argument over Japanese intentions:

Fig. 5.14. *Pioneers of Asian Development*, by Kōga Saburō, Tōkyō Gekijō, May 1940. All the major characters in the play are Chinese. Professor Wu (Ichikawa Ennosuke II, seated) listens quietly to the arguments of Jo Shūmei (Sawamura Tosshi VIII) regarding Japan's true intentions toward China. (*Engei gahō*, June 1940)

PROFESSOR WU: Stop! I have something to say. (*All listen.*) Nobody loves China more than I. Because I know Japan, I know that Chinese cooperation with Japan will bring the greatest benefit to China. It will bring eternal peace to East Asia. I insist this is the best path for China to follow.[57]

The play propagated one of the most insidious and unproductive views held by Japanese during the war, the fiction that because Japanese intentions were honorable, peace in China would easily follow if the enemy sincerely "understands" the Japanese heart. In a brief exchange, two young Japanese newspaper correspondents, attached to the Imperial Army in Nanking, express their frustration at this Chinese failing:

CORRESPONDENT ONE: We must make Japan known.

CORRESPONDENT TWO: Our most urgent task is to get the people of China to understand the true feelings of the Japanese people. Peace in East Asia for all eternity depends on it.[58]

Many Chinese believed they understood Japanese intentions only too well. *China Night*, a Combined Old and New Drama by Torie Tetsuya, played

skillfully on audience emotions at the Naka-za in August. The plot echoed the government's paranoid fear of foreign spies, fanned by the sacred year's rabid xenophobia. A young Japanese merchant sailor, Tani, saves from drowning a beautiful Chinese girl, Eihō, nurses her back to health, and pledges his love to her. Tears flow in the audience when actress Taki Renko, playing Eihō, sings the plaintive smash hit song "China Night." When Eihō reveals that she is in fact a Chinese spy sent to lure Tani, the audience's tears turn to anger and deep indignation. Finally, the audience basks in a warm sense of vindication and pleasure when Tani, in the play's climax, confronts Eihō's "gang of Chinese spies," defeats them, and is rewarded by a grateful Japanese government.[59]

Theater publicists also linked ordinary programs to the sacred year. For example, Kataoka Nizaemon XII's bill of *The Loyal Retainers* and other standard plays at the Ōsaka Kabuki-za in October was advertised as a Performing Arts Festival entry sponsored by the Japan Central League of Culture. Shōchiku publicists proclaimed in huge print: "A Stage Attraction Rich in Deeply Felt Nationalism and Traditional Kabuki Beauty Passionately Performed by Great East-West Masters."[60]

The New Order and the Bureau of Information

During 1940, the second Konoe cabinet devoted a great deal of energy and attention to establishing the New Order of East Asia. At home Japanese citizens were asked to increase military strength (*senryōku zōkyō*) and promote fighting spirit (*sen'i kōyō*). A powerful, coordinated propaganda campaign was needed to reiterate these goals until they were seared into every citizen's consciousness. Toward that end between July and October 1940, the Konoe administration transformed the Office of Information into the Cabinet Bureau of Information. The new bureau was given six hundred executive and staff positions to effectively speak with the authority of the prime minister and his cabinet.[61] The bureau's mission was to win the war of ideas (*shisōsen*): "The restructured Bureau of Information brings together functions of the Information Office of the Foreign Ministry, the Information Office of the Army Ministry, the Military Information Office of the Navy Ministry, and the Information Office of the Home Ministry, Peace Preservation Section, and centralizes government information and propaganda activities."[62]

The bureau's first director was Itō Nobumi, a man familiar with the Nazi propaganda network. Responding to intense jockeying for power within the new organization, each of the major agencies involved was awarded the directorship of a bureau division:

Navy: First Division, Planning and Policy
Army: Second Division, Domestic Information
Foreign Ministry: Third Division, Foreign Information
Home Ministry: Fourth Division, Censorship
Bureau of Information: Fifth Division, Culture[63]

It is probably true that the bureau never became as all-powerful in Japan as the Nazi propaganda machine was in Germany.[64] Nonetheless, as we will see, the bureau exercised unparalleled authority to guide and control arts and culture, including kabuki, through its fifth division, Culture. The fifth division's second section was assigned two responsibilities: "to guide and effectuate propaganda through film, theater, and light entertainment" and "to supervise and guide organizations in film, theater and light entertainment."[65] Until the end of the war, the Bureau of Information's mission of theater guidance on behalf of the New Order would be carried out through rewards, exhortations, regulations, group discussions (*kondankai*), and one-on-one advice.[66]

Officials in the second section immediately set about formulating guidelines for the types of plays, films, and popular entertainment that would contribute to a New Order of East Asia.[67] The editors of *Engei gahō*, following the new bureau's line, told their readers: "At this unprecedented time of change in our nation, it is natural that old currents in the theater are being forced to retreat as the New Order advances forward step by step."[68] It was up to specialists in theater to suggest ways to implement the vague concepts of the "New Order." The old order (*kyūsei*) in theater primarily meant kabuki, with its staid plays and old-fashioned morality. Theater guidance officials in the bureau were authorized to specify special programs or themes that promoted national goals. Professional kabuki playwright Kimura Kinka did not fault the New Order, but he worried that kabuki was bound to be "in a miserable position under the New Order." Inasmuch as plots and themes are not of major interest in kabuki plays, Kimura thought, "kabuki will be overlooked" or, far worse, "kabuki will not itself participate in the New Order."[69] Kimura's feared marginalization did not occur, but the New Order's call for timely plays and its disinterest in "old" drama was a harbinger of government policies that would work against kabuki.

The Bureau of Information was publicly identified as the lead agency in establishing the New Order in Japan and Asia. Symbolizing the bureau's predominant role, on September 15 it took over for its headquarters the Tōhō Corporation's Teikoku Gekijō, or Imperial Theater, facing the imperial palace. When the Teikoku Gekijō was built in 1911, it was the most lavish Western-

style theater in Japan.[70] (Fifteen years later General Douglas MacArthur made his headquarters in the Dai Ichi Insurance Building adjacent to the theater and also overlooking the imperial palace.) When bureau officials closed this "Western" theater, they were demonstrating Japanese cultural ascendancy. To celebrate the switch from a commercial theater to a "great stage managed by the state," bureau officials led singing of patriotic songs and shouts of "banzai" for the emperor. The bureau promised not to close the stage completely but said it might be used for special plays and films to "directly advance national policy."[71]

It was now essential that theater managers and artists reconcile their art with the government's call for a New Order. Through 1940, articles purporting to link theater to the New Order filled the pages of *Engei gahō*. In one of the more interesting of these, under the section title "Under the New Order: An Investigation of Theatrical Performance Texts," critic Miyake Saburō "reinvestigated" fifteen masterpieces in the kabuki repertory, identifying in them splendid "citizens' spirit" (*kokuminsei*) that made them appropriate to the New Order. Miyake claimed he found national patriotism (*aikoku*) in Tokugawa period plays, although that concept did not exist in feudal times. *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* was suitable because it did not depict the feudal era alone: "in any time and in any society it reveals the true essence of our national spirit." The child sacrifice in *The Village School* scene of *Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy* honored parent-child love (*oyako no aijō*) and was, Miyake wrote, appropriate to the New Order. He even liked suspicious samurai with divided loyalties (such as Katō Kiyomasa) and characters torn between duty and human feelings (*giri* and *ninjō*), as in Chikamatsu's love suicide plays. Just two plays in the repertory possessed undesirable qualities: *Tattered Brocade Revenge* was excessively cruel, and *A Tale of New Fallen Snow* was overly erotic.[72] In Miyake's worshipful view, kabuki's old masterpieces, played in theaters ad nauseam, were bursting with citizens' spirit and therefore just what the New Order of theater needed. This rosy view was what one might expect of a critic who loved kabuki unconditionally. Others were more critical of "old theater."

Citizens' Drama: A Breathtaking Proposal

Taking advantage of the positive spirit generated by the celebrations of imperial rule and the Bureau of Information's new mandate for cultural control, the bureau proposed to implement the main features of Iizuka Tomoichirō's Citizen's Drama plan of 1937 and 1938. If carried out, a new system of Citizens' Drama would largely supplant the existing capitalist, commercial system of

theater management. The plan had three legs: the government would build national theaters (*kokuritsu gekijō*) in every province and large city, the government would organize and support a score of permanent citizens' theater troupes (*kokumin gekidan*), and these troupes would move from one national theater to the next, performing a repertory of Citizens' Drama scripts selected by the government.[73] This entire interrelated structure would be controlled and managed by government officials for the purpose of "strengthening the nation's effort to win victory in the war."[74]

The bureau's proposal cast a bright light on concepts first enunciated by Iizuka in 1937. Citizen's Drama should be wholly indigenous, promoting Japanese spirit and rejecting all Western theater ideologies. It should be a theater of the folk (*minzoku engeki*) devoted to all of the people.[75] The chief polemicist of Citizens' Drama, Ōyama Isao, attempted to show how it differed from Western theater. According to Ōyama, the restraint seen in Japanese theatrical realism expressed a culture of "internalized emotion," while the surface display of physical activity seen in European realism was "based on the propensity to show every emotion the individual feels."[76]

The head of the Theater and Film Section within the Bureau of Information, Fuwa Suketoshi, seemed to apply ideals of traditional morality that were far from new when he urged that, under the New Order, actors, playwrights, managers, and producers come together to create "theater to benefit the cultural life of the people. . . . Japanese theater, an art of all citizens, will safeguard its own development, guard against floods of licentiousness, and prevent straying from morality and wholesomeness."[77]

As might be expected, the managers of Japan's three large theatrical corporations, Shōchiku, Tōhō, and Yoshimoto, were horrified by the bureau's grandiose scheme. The proposed national theater structures and citizens' theater troupes would compete directly, and unfairly, with commercial theaters and producers. Once the full system was in place, Shōchiku would not be able to mount kabuki programs at all because its actors would be scattered over several dozen national theaters in the hinterlands. However, the bureau's plan remained only a plan. Officials were apparently too timid to ask for the funds needed to build thirty or forty national theaters or to maintain scores of troupes. In any case, Japan's wartime budget was already overstrained paying for tanks and airplanes in 1940. There was no money for frivolous academies and theaters. Although this concrete plan was never realized, the ideals of Citizens' Drama were not easily set aside.

Control Organizations

The drive to exert greater control over civilian society led government agencies to create hundreds of new organizations and committees. In theater, actors, directors, and playwrights were brought under closer supervision. In one initiative, Bureau of Information officials and the chief theater censor of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police, Terasawa Takanobu, suggested to actors of all commercial genres that they form a single organization. The "suggestion" was accepted, and the Greater Japan Actors' Association was born. Infighting for control of the executive board was resolved only when Metropolitan Police officials intervened (an indication of where power resided). In the end, Nakamura Kichiemon I was elected chair, Onoe Kikugorō VI became vice chair, and, Utaemon, Nizaemon, Ennosuke, Mitsugorō, Tosshi, Jukai, and other kabuki actors controlled the executive board. At the conclusion of the inaugural meeting, Kichiemon led assembled actors in three shouts of "banzai" for the emperor and three more "to thank the chief of the Metropolitan Police for his support."[78] Through the war years the government used the expanded association to screen out politically undesirable performers.[79]

In a second initiative, officials organized a Culture Division within the Imperial Rule Assistance Association. On October 19, Kishida Kunio, arguably Japan's most influential *shingeki* playwright, was invited to head the Imperial Rule Assistance Association's Culture Division.[80] When he accepted his appointment, Kishida explained that he had been uninterested in politics in peacetime; now, however, Japan was at war, and he could not ignore the passionate call of duty. He envisioned a supreme role for Japan in world culture, echoing a strain of nationalist thought going back at least to the late Tokugawa era. In 1857, Hotta Masayoshi, the shogun's chief councilor, had predicted that after Japan strengthened its military, it would accomplish its "great task of uniting all the world," and "our hegemony [will be] acknowledged throughout the globe."[81] In 1940, Kishida imagined Japanese culture ascendant throughout the world: "It is a serious matter that we do not share with others our cultural inheritance except in times of crisis. I firmly believe the culture we have created at the present time is a bright light that will shine on other races for a long time. I believe in the ideal that our culture is the mother of world culture."[82] Acting out of patriotic impulse, Ōtani Takejirō invited Kishida to lecture Shōchiku personnel on their responsibilities under the New Order. This Kishida was delighted to do, and on December 24, speaking from the stage of the Kabuki-za, he exhorted assembled kabuki stars, fellow playwrights, and

producers to actively build a New Theater for a New Japan.[83] Presumably some employees were uplifted, but a staunchly capitalist corporation like Shōchiku was not likely to self-destruct in the interests of an ill-defined New Order.

In a third initiative officials in the Ministry of Education appointed a Theater, Film, and Music Betterment Committee. Its theater members were Kishida Kunio of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, Waseda University theater professor Kawatake Shigetoshi, former New Cooperative Theater playwright Nagata Hideo, and theater critic Miyake Shūtarō.[84] The committee's first draft report, "Concrete Measures for Theater Betterment," dated November 26, 1940, opened with a preamble explaining why theater betterment was needed: "Observation shows that theater is important in all countries through its power to move citizens' thoughts and lives. . . . But the current haphazard free-enterprise production system (*jiyū eigyō*) cannot create a wholly original theater for imperial subjects that is in tune with the New Japan." The report then laid out broad suggestions that theater betterment should be "induced and assisted" by direct government action. The government should fund and manage theater support organizations, a theater academy, a theater research center, a university-level theater curriculum, and in rural areas support special performances to raise the deficient cultural level of provincial audiences. The committee listed specific suggestions for improving production, troupe organization, acting, directing, scripts, play censorship, play selection, preservation, and guidance. It is significant that the committee, which included no representative of Shōchiku or Tōhō, called on commercial theater to make drastic changes: disconnect theater ownership from play production, limit the right to produce to established troupes, require all performers to belong to a troupe, and use producers as the conduit for a unified national censorship system. The committee supported a test for actors. Overall the committee proposed to place more power in government hands, pointing ominously to expanded thought control.[85] Writing two years later, committee member Miyake Shūtarō remembered that the committee expected its proposal to be the basis of a formal Theater Law (Engeki Hō). However, as in 1939 a Theater Law was not proposed in the Diet in 1940.[86]

Forms of Government Control

Nothing concrete was done to carry out the many recommendations of the Betterment Committee, in part because six months earlier many of its provisions had been preempted by police ordinance 14, "Theater Performance Control Regulations," announced by the Tokyo Metropolitan Police on February

1, 1940, and made effective April 20.[87] This comprehensive ordinance, in 116 articles, was five times the length of the Betterment Committee report. The ordinance continued or revised existing requirements for theater construction, production permission, troupe organization, actor support groups, and audience control. Article 87 barred from the stage the insane, the crippled, fugitives from the law, performers under the age of fourteen, and actors whose thoughts, behavior, or past history were deemed "unsuitable." Article 100 proscribed any play that "gives concern" of besmirching the imperial family or national prestige, upsetting public order, rewarding evil, allowing criminals to escape justice, or harming the good name of national literature.[88] According to article 66, "Theatrical productions must consist of stage plays that diligently foster national spirit and inculcate knowledge and virtue in citizens." The good news was that censorship approval of a script would be good for three years (rather than two).

Under other provisions, ticket prices, which had climbed as high as eight and a half yen for Grand Kabuki,[89] were capped at five yen (with exceptions "to preserve kabuki in a sound condition"). Police registration was extended to revue artists, dancers, and musicians as well as actors. Productions were limited to five and a half hours. This represents a significant change, for it was not uncommon to cram seven, eight, or nine plays into a program and for performances to last up to twelve hours (Fig. 5.15).[90] This censorship requirement meshed with a common perception that kabuki plays were too long: in early 1940, critic Oyama Sōkai showed how to make "Short Kabuki" by chopping twenty to thirty minutes from *The Village School, Sukeroku: Flower of Edo, The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*, and other beloved classics.[91]

Kabuki Censorship in the Sacred Year

The spiritual nature of the glorious celebrations of 1940 demanded extra vigilance by government officials. Throughout the year police censors in Tokyo and Osaka were alert to search out and suppress offensive political thought or immorality. Writing in September 1940, the editor of *Engei gahō* observed that in the future censorship of theater would become as strict as film censorship: "inevitably censors will make a long list of kabuki plays deemed impossible (*fukanō*) to produce."[92] This did not happen, at least not yet. In 1940, Tokyo's chief wartime theater censor, Terasawa Takanobu, was still relatively lenient with kabuki.[93]

Several other agencies exercised censorship control as well. In what appears to have been a minor power grab, the Library Section of the Home Minis-

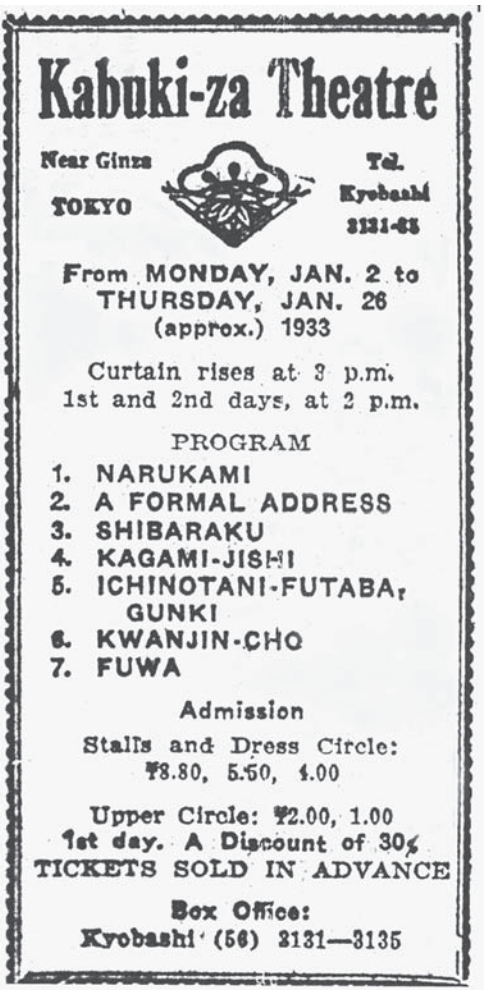


Fig. 5.15. The long January 1933 program at the Kabuki-za in Tokyo was not unusual in offering seven items lasting seven or eight hours: four dramas, one dance, and one dance-drama, all classics, as well as a formal stage announcement (*kōjō*). (From *Japan Times & Mail*, January 5, 1933)

try issued a ban on "low-class attractions," including jazz bands, such as the Rhythm Boys and the Rhythm Girls, revues, and popular singers. It acted in the summer of 1940 in support of the government's Movement for New Living.[94] Information sections of the Navy Ministry and Army Ministry routinely exercised authority to approve or ban plays about military matters. And within the Bureau of Information, an entire division was given "censorship" responsibility that covered theater and other media.[95] In 1940, the bureau ordered existing theater magazines to consolidate, in part to ration scarce newsprint, but also to install government-approved editors who would follow bureau propaganda points without cavil and thereby lessen the censor's burden.

During 1940, the police censor in Osaka prohibited "scandalous" kabuki and

bunraku love scenes. As a result, a production of Chikamatsu Monzaemon's famous *Love Suicides at Amijima* scheduled for the Naka-za in January was banned: the play's eroticism was "inappropriate to the spirit of the times."[96] Nakamura Kichiemon I was not allowed to perform a favorite role, Naojirō in *The Country Samurai*, because Naojirō's love scene with courtesan Michitose was unacceptably sensuous.[97] And yet censorship control of kabuki was not total in 1940: Ichikawa Ennosuke II was allowed to star in one of his favorite comic antihero roles, Tatsuji in *Revenge on Togitatsu,* at the Tōkyō Gekijō in October. Playwright Kimura Kinka's play showed that the samurai code of honor causes cruel and meaningless murder. The theme was out of step with the times, and censors did not approve the play again during the war.[98]

Traditional kabuki-style dance (*Nihon buyō*) also was brought under government purview in 1940. A September 26 newspaper headline proclaimed: "Dance Association Sweeps Out Pornographic Pieces." In order to "bring our dance world into the vanguard of the government's New Order Movement," four kabuki-style dance associations joined to form the Greater Japan Dance League, headed by veteran kabuki actor Matsumoto Kōshirō VII. At the first general meeting, members agreed to embrace sweeping reforms in two areas. Luxury in performance was resolutely forbidden (no new costumes, no new sets, no floral gifts, reduce ticket prices, and conserve on posters and programs). More important, "members, following the spirit of the times . . . voluntarily reexamined the traditional repertory for erotic themes and decided to banish" some thirty popular dances that condoned immoral or degenerate love, marital infidelity, or sadism.[99]

Censorship was an accepted fact of life in the theater. In believing that government guidance of society was both useful and necessary, theater artists were reflecting a broad consensus of public opinion. Barak Kushner cites a 1940 magazine poll in which two-thirds of respondents believed "social controls should be *further strengthened* to help support Japan's aims in China."[100] Artists in all genres exercised self-censorship to avoid confrontation with the Special Higher Police. For example, in September 1940, when celebrations honoring the imperial founding were reaching a climax, members of the Professional Storytellers' Association announced the results of an extensive "voluntary reexamination" of comic *rakugo* tales and serious *kōdan* stories. To bring their performances into "conformity with the New Order," they ranked 420 stories according to content: exceptionally high quality (206); require corrections through rewriting (114); avoid performing as much as possible (48); and resolutely discard at this time (52).[101] Members pledged to abandon immoral stories about gamblers, gangsters, and seductive women even though

these were their most popular pieces.[102] An editorial in the September issue of *Engei gahō* summed up the status of positive "cultural guidance" and negative "censorship" of theater in 1940.

> This month one light comedy at the Yūraku-za has been banned and two extensively rewritten. In Asakusa, performances of several women's sword plays (*onna kengeki*) have been halted. Apparently the censor will stop overt lovemaking, excessive or foolish laughter, and decadent gambler plays. Censorship is necessary at this time. Taxi dance halls are closed, and it is said that jazz and the waltz are next. Frivolous popular music records have been banned. The Seven-Seven Prohibitions have spread far.[103]

Patriotism Stimulates Kabuki

The Performing Arts Festival and other events during the sacred year stimulated a burst of new play production. Professional playwrights were encouraged to create original dramas suitable to the evolving war situation. New plays by both established and unknown playwrights were in great demand. As just one example, the Japan Central League of Culture awarded prizes of ¥1,000 for the best "new kabuki and new *shinpa*" scripts that celebrated the sacred occasion and were suitable for amateur and school performance.[104] Star actors were challenged by new and often unusual roles. The best stage directors were phenomenally busy. We do not have figures for 1940, but playwright-director Kubota Mantarō worked around the clock to usher fourteen new plays onto the stage in 1941. Kaneko Yōbun directed eleven new scripts that year, and Sekiguchi Jirō handled ten.[105]

As we have seen, the Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation was the major producer of kabuki plays. Ōtani Takejirō, Shōchiku's head in the Tokyo area, was also president of the Greater Japan Producers' Association. This extremely powerful organization encompassed all commercial theater producers and theater owners. It determined what plays could be shown on commercial stages in every part of Japan through its central committee and network of prefectural committees. Sitting on each committee was a local representative of the Special Higher Police whose influence was, in most cases, decisive. In order to demonstrate the association's full support of the government, on August 4, Ōtani Takejirō led theater owners and producers from the Kabuki-za to the outer gardens of the imperial palace, where they shouted "banzai" for the emperor. The group then proceeded to Yasukuni Shrine, where they offered prayers for the nation's war dead. (The souls of 2.4 million soldiers and sailors killed in battle, the nation's Warrior Gods, are enshrined there today.)

Fig. 5.16. On November 13, 1940, three hundred members of the Greater Japan Actors' Association shout "banzai" before the palace on the 2,600th anniversary of the founding of the imperial reign. Leading the cheers are Ichimura Uzaemon XV (left) and Onoe Kikugorō VI (right), chair and vice chair of the association. (From *Engei gahō*, December 1940)

That evening the manager of each Shōchiku theater stepped onto the stage, expressed gratitude to the emperor, and led the audience in silent prayer.[106]

As a symbol of its desire that kabuki should reach a larger, more egalitarian audience, on November 4, Shōchiku arranged for Uzaemon and his troupe to donate an outdoor performance of "ultranationalist" (*kokusui*) kabuki for a crowd of ten thousand city workers in Hibiya Park, in the center of Tokyo. Two weeks later, Shōchiku formed the Shōchiku Touring Theater Squad (Shōchiku Idō Engekitai) to bring kabuki and modern plays to factories, mines, and military bases around the country. In both of these actions, Shōchiku was falling in step with the Bureau of Information's goal of popularizing the traditional arts.[107]

The Home Ministry selected the Kabuki-za, the most important theater in Japan, to be the site of the climactic public ceremony celebrating 2,600 years of imperial rule. On November 10, speaker after speaker offered humble obeisance to the imperial reign. Three days later, Ichimura Uzaemon XV and Onoe Kikugorō VI led three hundred members of the just-formed Greater Japan Actors' Association from the Kabuki-za to the outer grounds of the imperial palace, where they shouted "banzai" three times for the emperor (Fig. 5.16).[108] On November 26, major theaters in the city offered free performances for families

attending the solemn Autumn Extraordinary Festival of Yasukuni Shrine that honored the souls of their sons and relatives killed in the war.[109]

To round off a year of feverish celebration, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police, the newly enhanced Bureau of Information, and the Imperial Rule Assistance Association brought together members of the Tokyo Producers' Association and the Japan League of Theatrical Artists. At a massive ceremony held at the Kabuki-za on December 26, more than two thousand actors, performers, troupe leaders, and producers quashed their differences to inaugurate a national League of Performing Arts and Culture, the government's umbrella organization intended to guide and control all commercial performing arts. It goes without saying that one of the speakers was Ōtani Takejirō, a director of the Kabuki-za and Shōchiku's master manipulator of kabuki in Tokyo.[110] Meanwhile, in Osaka, Ōtani's twin brother, Shirai Matsujirō, chairman of the Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation, had been elected adviser to a reformed Kansai Kabuki Actors' Association.[111] To celebrate the occasion, and because Japan was emerging from recession, Shōchiku raised low-ranking kabuki actors' salaries by 10 percent in 1940.[112]

The government's commitment in 1940 to *some* kind of change in theater was unequivocal: "We intend to give strict guidance to theater, film, and music," the Bureau of Information announced on October 17.[113] Change must occur, but it must be in a "Japanese" direction. The slight "Westernization" of kabuki that Morita Kanya XII and XIII, Ichikawa Sadanji I and II, and Ichikawa Ennosuke II had introduced had to be reversed. In any case, according to Iizuka Tomoichirō, kabuki was irrelevant to the task of constructing a new theater: "It is clear that kabuki artists, who are from a past era, cannot be put in charge of our national drama in the new era."[114]

The Vanguard Theater: Accommodation

In 1940, the Vanguard Theater sought to accommodate itself to the realities of militarization by moving to the right in its policies and actions. It reentered the government's good graces with a bang when it chose to stage, as its contribution to the 2,600th imperial year celebrations, Fujimori Nariyoshi's *Sino-Japanese Diplomacy: Foreign Minister Mutsu Munemitsu.* The play showed Foreign Minister Mutsu patiently negotiating the Treaty of Shimonoseki with Chinese delegate Ri Kōshō (Li Hongzhang) to end the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 (Fig. 5.17). Under the terms of the treaty, Korea, Taiwan, and the Liaotung Peninsula (Liaodong Bandao) were to be detached from China permanently.[115] But major European powers forced Mutsu to return the Liaotung

Fig. 5.17. The Vanguard Theater's production of *Sino-Japanese Diplomacy: Foreign Minister Mutsu*, by Fujimori Nariyoshi, Shinbashi Enbujō, March 1940. Prime Minister Itō Hirobumi (Kawarazaki Chōjūrō IV) shakes hands with Chinese delegate Ri Kōshō (Li Hongzhang), played by non-kabuki actor Sasaki Takamaru, formalizing the end of the Sino-Japanese War, 1894–1895. Japan's chief negotiator, Foreign Minister Mutsu Munemitsu (Nakamura Kan'emon II), modestly watches from the side. (From Nakamura Umenosuke et al., *Gurafu zenshin-za*)

area to China. For this Mutsu endured rancorous criticism that he was "a traitor, a traitor." In the play's final scene, Mutsu confides his belief that the treaty marks the beginning of Japan's rise to greatness: "From this point on, Japan will make a great leap. In fact we are making that leap now. This is the time . . . a New Japan begins."[116] Of course the militaristic and nationalistic New Japan being welcomed by Mutsu had no use for the progressive ideals that the founders of the Vanguard Theater had espoused eight years earlier. Government officials showered the Vanguard production with awards for best script of 1940, best director, and best scene design. Kabuki actor Nakamura Kan'emon II was cited as the best actor of the year for his dignified portrayal of Foreign Minister Mutsu.[117]

In October the troupe moved further to the right. Under the direction of Itō Kisaku, the acting company added Mayama Seika's patriotic *General Nogi*

and the Capture of Port Arthur to its repertory (see Fig. 11.7). And the troupe announced that month its "cooperativist decision" to "fully align itself with the New Order policy of the government." Powell describes this action as "either patriotic or time-serving" depending on the sincerity or insincerity of the troupe's public statements.[118] Still organizationally independent from Shōchiku, the Vanguard Theater was able to conclude lucrative radio and film contracts. The troupe did a series of radio dramas for Radio Tokyo (Nihon Hōsō Kyōkai, or NHK), and it produced eighteen films with the Nikkatsu and Tōhō film companies.[119] Many were successful prize-winning releases. Flush with cash, the troupe was able to carry out one of its original dreams: over the course of a decade, it built in suburban Tokyo a self-contained theater community that included a training academy, housing for troupe members and their families, a modest theater, and film facilities. No other theater group, or commercial theater organization for that matter, could match its facilities.[120]

The Status of Other Theatre Forms

In Osaka, puppet artists at the Yotsubashi Bunraku-za (Bunraku Puppet Theater in Yotsubashi) dedicated three months of programs in 1940 to honor the 2,600th year of the imperial reign. Management conspicuously chose to stage traditional history plays with themes of feudal loyalty. One modern play, *Three Honored Heroic Human Bombs,* was a revival of a 1932 success. A program note informed readers that this play "is suitable to the times" because "the heroic deaths of the three heroes in battle, unprecedented in the entire world, rouse our national fighting spirit."[121]

Special nō performances were scheduled to celebrate the sacred year. Most nō plays express nationalist virtues: revere the imperial family (*kōshitsu sonnō*) and honor the nation (*kokushi sonsō*). The nō world also showed its direct support for the China Incident struggle. In 1940, the specialist nō publisher Wanya Shoten released the first collection of contemporary nō songs that celebrated the war, titled *China Incident Short Song Collection*. Wanya advertised it as "a song collection for these times praising glorious heroes of the Imperial forces fighting in the China Incident. Our company is first with nō songs of the home front."[122]

But there were also troubling aspects to nō. Since the Meiji era, actors were forbidden to impersonate imperial family members on the stage, yet Shinto deities and members of the imperial family appeared in many nō plays. This contradiction had been a contentious political issue for more than a decade, and in the early 1930s imperial ideologues protested that nō should observe

the law. With the nation's attention in 1940 focused on acts of reverence for the imperial line, police censors stopped a performance of *The Imperial Visit to Ohara,* a traditional piece in which the main role (*shite*) is Go Shirakawa, a twelfth-century retired emperor. Shocked, the heads of the five nō schools — Kanze, Hōshō, Kongō, Konparu, and Kita — promised to revise the repertory in order to "prevent offense to the imperial family." In the spring and winter, they announced they would "voluntarily" delete and rewrite passages in eighteen scripts and would "show restraint in choosing to stage" another nine plays. They explained that the old texts represented an "age that lacked the scholarship and philosophy of today's national ideology." Yet, the following spring, a newspaper article described performances of *The Ataka Barrier* and *Two Shizukas* that used the old undesirable texts.[123] Nothing had been corrected or improved.

The premiere of Matsui Shōō's kabuki play *Taiwan Shrine* at the Kabuki-za in March 1929 had been a special case. The censor allowed Matsumoto Kōshirō VII to play Imperial Prince Kitashirakawa no Miya despite protests. "Up until now, in the history of our nation, there has never been a case where an actor impersonated an imperial noble," fumed the Imperial Household Agency. But popular audiences had thrilled to the sight of stately religious rites enacted before the sacred shrine. Audiences flocked to the Kabuki-za, and authorities allowed the play to continue.[124] But similar lenience was not possible in the tenth year of the war in China.

In the waning months of the sacred year, the police even turned their attention to the frightening specter of unregulated children's picture plays (*kamishibai*) (Fig. 5.18). Officials of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police announced that *kamishibai* painters, manufacturers, and performers must pass an examination given by the police and join the Greater Japan Picture Play Association, an organization set up by the police.[125]

Proletarian Theater Expunged

At a time when the censor was blocking undesirable plays from staunchly conservative kabuki, nō, and *bunraku* stages, it was inconceivable that the police would tolerate leftist criticism by *shingeki* troupes. Of the dozen progressive, proletarian *shingeki* troupes that had formed in the 1920s and 1930s, the New Cooperative Troupe and the New Tsukiji Troupe were the largest, best established, and most influential in 1940.[126] The two troupes used rhetoric and play choice to avoid greater repression during the sacred year. In March, members of the New Tsukiji Troupe adopted a manifesto, "Policy for the New Tsukiji

Fig. 5.18. The children's picture play (*kamishibai*) *Rice and Soldiers*, by the Japan Educational Picture Play Association, 1941. Narration for panel 17, one of six showing Japanese soldiers in battle, reads: "Our army's Wild Eagles shower bombs and rain machine gun fire on the enemy. The Relief Squad attacks the enemy with a hail of fire. The enemy is finally destroyed. 'Banzai!' 'Banzai!' This high ground will be a vital stronghold for our soldiers." (Author's collection)

Troupe," going beyond the recantations of 1937–1938, that vowed to establish an "artistic direction," follow an undefined "ethnic Japanese realism," serve the "needs of the new race (*atarashii minzoku*)," and work toward the "unity of Japanese culture under one wing."[127] The troupe's *tenkō* followed that of the New Cooperative Troupe by about one year.

As its contribution to the Performing Arts Festival in the sacred year, the New Tsukiji Troupe staged "a war-affirming drama," *The Second Person*, that was well suited to the ultranationalist occasion.[128] Meanwhile, the New Cooperative Troupe strained its resources to mount *Dedication of the Great Buddha*, by Nagata Hideo, honoring the Hall of the Great Buddha built at Tōdai Temple in Nara in 751. The play had two themes. The first was the superiority of indigenous Japanese culture. The building that housed the Buddha was to be the largest wooden structure in the world. But more important, the head priest of the new temple, after consulting with priests invited from every nation, firmly decided that Buddha's image should be cast in "Japanese style" rather than in an "international style" imported from India, China, or Korea.

That is, Nagata was promoting a "spirit of unique Japanese culture" (*Nihon bunka no dokujisei*) that was fully congruent with government policy. The second theme was Buddha's mercy: in the play's final scene the immense golden statue extends its hand and lifts a dying woman on its outstretched palm, miraculously transporting her to Buddha's paradise with her dying breath. Nagata rewrote a twenty-year-old script for this production. It had been unproduced, but now its aura of religiosity and cultural pride was eminently attuned to the times. Six months later, Nagata's script was revised by Murayama Tomoyoshi and performed by Ichikawa Jukai III, young Ichikawa Danjūrō XI, and other kabuki actors under Senda Koreya's direction at the Tōkyō Gekijō. This production was sponsored by the Japan Central League of Culture.[129]

But the police believed these choices were decoys. In other recent productions by the two troupes—*Land of Volcanic Ash, Northeast Wind*, and *Before the Dawn*—they had detected strong "leftist ideology." The shadow-boxing ended on August 19, 1940. The Special Higher Police arrested approximately one hundred leftist, socialist, or proletarian *shingeki* artists, including Murayama and Nagata, under provisions of the Peace Preservation Law. The police called on the two troupes to "voluntarily" disband, and two days later the troupes' general secretaries, Nagata Hideo and Susukida Kenji, made a joint announcement on behalf of their members:

> Inasmuch as our troupes have been at the center of Japanese proletarian theater that is based on socialist ideas, we have hindered the creation of a new Japanese theater. . . . Consequently we now dissolve our two troupes, expel foreign elements, and at this crucial time awaken and purify our hearts, earnestly devoting ourselves to the establishment of a new and wholly Japanese theater culture.[130]

Speaking for New Cooperative Troupe members, Nagata went on to say:

> I am not the least bit discouraged by this dissolution. Now that the past is cleared away, we want to start anew and bring forth a citizens' theater that is healthy (*kenkō*) and cheerful (*meirō*). . . . This is absolutely not the death of *shingeki*, but the birth of a new citizens' *shingeki*.[131]

Despite this abject *tenkō*, police in Tokyo placed twenty-five leading members of the troupes under strict arrest to prevent "traces of foreign ideas and socialist ideology from harming new troupes they might form."[132] The troupes' audience support groups of 1,200 members each were dissolved.[133] Similarly, police in Osaka and Kyoto arrested proletarian actors and directors in the Kansai region. The dividing line between those who supported the govern-

ment (or pretended to) and those who professed left-wing beliefs was stark. Some *shingeki* playwrights and directors spent most of the remaining years of the war in prison or detention. Some artists were tortured and killed. (Stark descriptions of police brutality, kicking prisoners to death, castrating them, and beating them senseless with baseball bats, were published in October 1945, after Japan's surrender.)[134]

We can note that the wholesale arrest of leftists in theater in mid-August followed directly on the formation of the second Konoe cabinet in mid-July. When the prime minister declared that the purpose of the New Order was to "unite the energies of the state and the people" into a single "internal structure," Konoe was also announcing the obverse: cultural activities outside the boundaries of the New Order would not be tolerated.[135] The strident comment of a Kyoto newspaper a few weeks later is typical of mass media support of the government's suppression of leftist theater. It called for an absolutist or authoritarian Japanese culture to replace discarded foreign ideologies:

> In this time of unprecedented change, strong and vital policies move our nation from liberalism, now expelled, toward an absolutist (*zettaishugi*) Japanese culture. In the theater world, dissolution of the New Cooperative, New Tsukiji, Ōsaka Cooperative (Ōsaka Kyōdō), and other suspected left-wing troupes has been ordered. . . . Other smaller troupes will disband voluntarily, and the continuation of still others is questionable. . . . We expect a New Japanese Theater and Cinema will emerge out of the shining womb of the New Order.[136]

The Home Ministry believed the Sacred War in Asia could be won only by "resurrecting the Oriental spiritual culture which culminates in [Japan's] way of the Gods."[137] Hence it was essential to mold all Japanese institutions, without exception, into tools that could give wholehearted support to the ideological as well as the material war. Artists who did not cooperate would be eliminated. Using their broad peacekeeping powers, the police arrested 66,000 persons for political or thought crimes (*shisō han*) between 1928 and 1941. Of these 5,500 who did not recant their beliefs were brought to trial.[138] In the police roundup of theater dissidents in the sacred year, kabuki actors, playwrights, and producers were conspicuously absent.[139]

Peter High has shown in convincing detail the process whereby proletarian film writers and directors were co-opted, persuaded, and seduced into supporting expansionist military and cultural policies even though they were originally opposed.[140] Similarly, Kan lists a surprising number of leftist and proletarian theater leaders who, soon after their arrest, began working hand

in hand with government officials.[141] An interesting example is New Cooperative Troupe general secretary Nagata Hideo, who was a well-established fifty-five-year-old playwright at the time of his arrest. Less than a week later, he was allowed to write and publish "Theater under the New Order," in which he explained the government's New Order theater policy!

> As everyone knows, the world situation is in unprecedented flux. But that instability should not cause pessimism. History shows that after an era reaches its full development, the next era springs forth from turmoil. Now liberal culture is in the process of being destroyed, and in the present chaotic conditions the form of our culture to come is indistinct. For seventy years, we Japanese have made it a point to directly import Western culture. This has not been a truly indigenous culture welling up from the blood of our race. The previous seventy years of culture must undergo reinvestigation, and, when on that basis we create a national New Order appropriate to a new society, I believe without doubt that within this will be reflected a New Order of theater.[142]

Nagata's convoluted writing style reflects the undefined, abstract nature of the New Order. His ideological shift into the government's camp, days after his arrest, however, could not be more clear.[143] Three months later, Nagata's name appeared on the roster of the Ministry of Education's Theater, Film, and Music Betterment Committee alongside conservative stalwarts Kawatake Shigetoshi and Ōtani Takejirō.[144] Within a year he was beating the patriotic drums in support of morale tours to the troops on the China front.[145] And in 1942, he was a Bureau of Information judge, evaluating Citizens' Dramas and awarding prizes to those plays that best supported the war.[146] Through ideological conversion, Nagata successfully reinvented himself as a spokesman for the imperial cause. Many proletarian *shingeki* artists found that they could survive and even prosper as individuals after being arrested. But police suppression in 1940 completely and irretrievably shattered proletarian theater as an organization and as a movement.

Within this milieu of clamorous emperor worship and nationalist jingoism, it is not surprising that kabuki actors leading the Vanguard Troupe staged several strongly nationalist plays in 1940. Otherwise, ideological switching did not occur in the kabuki world because there was no opposition to the war in kabuki. One American who saw most kabuki productions in Tokyo that sacred year seems not to have recognized the intensely political nature of the programs he witnessed. Faubion Bowers was a young pianist who stumbled onto kabuki en route to Java to investigate gamelan music. Captivated by kabuki's

flamboyant artistry, he stayed on in Tokyo from March 1940 through March 1941. In several accounts of nearly daily attendance at kabuki performances, he makes no mention of plays that celebrated the imperial reign or the war, of kabuki actors marching to the imperial palace, or of the jailing of *shingeki* actors, playwrights, and directors.[147]

Police censors carefully examined other *shingeki* productions in 1940 for improper thoughts. The censor in Osaka was especially severe, stopping a musical version of Tanizaki Junichirō's *Portrait of Shunkin*. He also questioned the Literary Theater's program directed by Kishida Kunio, which the censor in Tokyo had allowed.[148] Under the headline "Translated Drama Banned—Literary Theater's Kansai Tour Suspended," the *Miyako* newspaper explained that the troupe's first-ever tour to Osaka and Kyoto in October had narrowly "escaped death":

> The Osaka municipal censor's office affirmed its rejection of the Literary Theater's planned production of Marcel Pagnol's *Marius* in the Kansai area as well as the troupe's alternative play, Ibsen's *Wild Duck*, upholding a policy of "absolutely forbidding translated drama." . . . However, the censor will approve a fully "Japanized" version of the play if Marius is a crew member of a Japanese whaling ship and if Fanny wears her hair in Japanese style. By avoiding the original play's distortions, the Literary Theater's tour has escaped death.[149]

The censor explained that all plays in Osaka were expected to support the Japanese Spirit, something that translated dramas, based in foreign cultures, could not possibly do.[150] Note that this Japanese view of racial purity is astonishingly similar to the position taken by Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels in Nazi Germany in 1938: "[Art] arises from mysterious and profound powers which are rooted in the national character. It can therefore only be produced and managed by the 'children of the national character' according to the needs and the intractable [artistic] urge of the nation."[151]

The government crusade against foreign ideology was not restricted to theater. British and American culture and arts in particular were suppressed in the press, literature, films, and radio. In autumn 1940 the various information agencies mounted a formal campaign to brand English an "enemy language." Soon the theater term "matinee" (*machine*) disappeared from newspaper and magazine articles, replaced by *hiruma kōgyō* (daytime performance). Several years before, newspapers had playfully asked if "papa" and "mama" were Japanese words. By 1940, the levity had disappeared.[152] In September, railway officials announced that "people's voices, in conformity with the times, are

asking for the complete abolition" of English-language signs. "Station Master," "Toilet," "Entrance," and "Platform" soon disappeared.[153] The absence of English signs presented no problem, however, "because the signs are no longer needed by foreigners in Japan," presumably because few English-speaking foreign tourists were traveling in Japan at the end of 1940.[154] In October, a dozen popular theater and light entertainment troupes "voluntarily" abandoned the English terms "dancing team," "revue," and "show." In line with this policy, the Yoshimoto Follies became the Yoshimoto Shōbu Tai (Yoshimoto Song and Dance Squad).[155]

Even without "foreign" corruption, however, local Japanese plays contained offensive material that the Osaka censor was duty bound to suppress in the interest of public safety. Eroticism, which implied selfish behavior, was always suspect. Certain sexually titillating works, such as the many dramatizations of *Plum Blossom Calendar*, Tamenaga Shunsui's 1842 novel about the lives of geisha, were "time and again . . . banned from stage reproduction for [their] erotic characteristics."[156]

Theater's Wartime Mission

As the sacred year came to a close, *Engei gahō* stressed in grandiloquent phrases the theater's heightened role in the gathering conflict:

> The dispatch of our Imperial Military Forces to the front lines having entered the fourth year and the goals of our Sacred War having proven not easy to achieve . . . we subjects, who all bear the burden of constructing the New Order of East Asia, keenly feel our fundamental and natural obligation to *maishin*, to dash forward with all our strength, to exalt the National Honor.[157] . . . In order to engender loyalty, we will purify our National Entertainment Life. We solemnly devote our utmost energy to the promotion of Theatrical Culture, pouring all of our knowledge into its diffusion, elevation, reformation, and development. We face a special challenge . . . to extend entertainment's range, to reach the lives of farmers, foresters, fisherman, and villagers. . . . In this time of emergency, showing the essence of the entire nation and embracing the spirit of our frontline heroes, we devote ourselves to realizing the establishment of a Theatrical Culture in accord with National Policy.[158]

As might be expected, this semi-official statement on behalf of the theatrical world is replete with long-winded generalities and short on specifics. Nonetheless, the editorial acknowledged several crucial points: the primacy of national

Fig. 5.19. By 1940, producers of the Nichigeki Revue have replaced bare-legged chorines with formations of severely dressed young women doing martial arts routines. (From Mainichi Shinbunsha, ed., *Shashin Shōwa sanjūnen shi*)

policy, the need to reform current theater practices, and a new emphasis on reaching general audiences in the countryside.

This was not good news for commercial kabuki. Still, the kabuki world tried to show it was in step with the nation's changed circumstances. One direct tactic was simply to declare that kabuki met government expectations. In October, young actors under Shōchiku management formed a New Order Kabuki Troupe (Shintaisei Kabuki Gekidan), named the Kabuki Club (Kabuki Kai). Among its twenty or so young actors were presumptive heirs to the Onoe Kikugorō, Ichikawa Danjūrō, Matsumoto Kōshirō, Ichimura Uzaemon, and Nakamura Utaemon acting names. Perhaps a Shōchiku publicist wrote the new troupe's claim that "we base our work on the fundamental principal that authentic traditional kabuki conforms to the New Order."[159] In their first program at the Kabuki-za that November, the young actors of the Kabuki Club presented "authentic traditional" scenes from *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* for twenty matinees.[160] This was hardly the "new theater" that polemicists envisioned under the New Order.

In 1940, despite the glorious national celebrations, strains of the war were

becoming apparent. When nō actors from the Hōshō School traveled through Manchuria to give lessons and conduct recitals in 1940, they found that rehearsal texts (*keikobon*) had become expensive and difficult for their students to buy even in the largest cities.[161] Tokyo's residents were shocked when they were told that because current rice stocks were insufficient, white rice would not be served in city restaurants after August 1.[162] This was the start of food rationing and the beginning of caloric deprivation among civilians that would lead to near starvation. "On their own initiative," theater owners and producers in Kyoto agreed to limit posters, newspaper ads, and printed programs, following the lead of theaters in Osaka.[163] And the bare-legged chorus girls that had always been the major attraction of Tōhō's musical revues gave way to chorus lines of severely dressed young women executing *kendō* martial arts exercises (Fig. 5.19).

At the end of 1940, information officials presented an insistently upbeat image of domestic Japan and the war with China. A Greater Japan Air Show trumpeted Japan's brilliant advances in aviation technology. Sponsored by the army, navy, communications, munitions, and education ministries, its feature exhibit "told the story of our Wild Eagle pilots' brave battles in superior aircraft." On display were the battered planes in which air aces Saitō and Mizusaki had made dozens of (Chinese) kills. Though out of ammunition and riddled with bullets, these splendid aircraft "miraculously" brought their pilots home. Also on display was a Junker dive bomber shipped from Germany that had participated in "the brilliant bombing of London." In a distant corner of the exhibition hall, Japanese engineers demonstrated a marvelous advanced communication technology called *terebijon*, television.[164]

A year before Pearl Harbor, the army and navy greatly increased the number of young men they conscripted into the services — the so-called blood tax (*ketsuzei*) — in preparation for the larger conflict the government was planning. One of kabuki's budding stars, Onoe Shōroku II, was called into military service three times before the war ended. In July 1940, Onoe Kikugorō's eldest son, Onoe Baikō VII, received his "red letter" (*akagami*), or draft notice, and a few days later went to Yokosuka as directed to join a unit of heavy artillery. Not inducted because his health was poor, he later felt his life had been saved: "At the time, I felt regret because I could not help my country. . . . Later I heard my unit was among the invading forces at Hong Kong and Rabaul, where most men in the unit were killed in combat. I shiver when I think, 'what if I had been with them?'"[165] Young kabuki actors Nakamura Matagorō II, Kataoka Ichizō V, and Nakamura Kanzaburō XVII had already been drafted, and more would follow. And the war had scarcely begun.

CHAPTER SIX

Confrontation with America and Britain | 1941

No Personal Desires until Victory.
—Slogan, 1941

War No Hindrance to Kabuki Opening.
—Newspaper headline, December 11, 1941

Many months before the war with the Anglo-American enemy began on December 8, 1941, imperial subjects were regaled with the well-worn admonition "Luxury Is the Enemy" and a newer, more ominous warning, "No Personal Desires until Victory." These slogans, propagated by the Imperial Rule Assistance Association and the Bureau of Information, foreshadowed more stringent times to come. In the previous year, the cabinet of Prime Minister Konoe Fumimaro had established a Citizen's Republic of China under puppet president Ō Seiei (Wang Jingwei). In June 1941, the government stage-managed a state visit by the complaisant puppet president to Tokyo, with the usual cultural side trip to the Kabuki-za. There the Chinese leader met backstage with Shōchiku president Ōtani and stars Onoe Kikugorō VI, Ichimura Uzaemon XV, and Ichikawa Ennosuke II.[1]

Prime Minister Konoe announced plans to create a Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, essentially a Japan-led economic bloc, to complement the government's political and cultural push for an Asian New Order. In preparation for this broad task, the government exerted great effort in 1941 to finalize the New Order Movement at home. The war was a constant presence, affecting even traditional customs. Kabuki actors' New Year greetings to supporters referred to the national crisis, the Sacred War, the New Order, and the Imperial Rule Assistance Association. Nakamura Tokizō III, brother of Kichiemon I and Kanzaburō XVII, greeted supporters with a New Year poem titled "The Home Front Is Also a Battlefield: Strive at Your Workplace":

Although we do not fight on the front lines,
On the home front we cherish the same feelings.
We strive in earnest trepidation to create Patriotic Arts.

This was a commonplace sentiment after ten years of warfare in China.

In Kansai, Kataoka Nizaemon XIII and Kataoka Hidekō published the following pledge to supporters, perhaps in emulation of Ichikawa Ennosuke's militant New Commando Kabuki Company in Tokyo:

Reverently, we welcome this New Year of the Sacred War.
In the spirit of New Commandos,
We consecrate ourselves wholly, body and soul,
To create a Theater of the New Order.

The published poems were framed by slogans: "The Alarm Bell Rings for the National Crisis" and "The Entire Nation Together — Assist Imperial Rule."[2]

New sacrifices were necessary for the sake of victory. Gasoline, by now liquid gold, could only be obtained for military use, while civilians were restricted to burning charcoal or other substitute fuels. Old-fashioned horse-drawn taxis and human-powered *jinrikisha* reappeared.[3] Thousands of heavy temple bells were melted down, as were Buddhist candlesticks, incense burners, gongs, and flower vases, and their metal refashioned into shell casings. Children were asked to collect scrap metal of all kinds (as were American children after 1941) (Fig. 6.1). Traditional bamboo-and-pine New Year decorations (*kadomatsu*) were banished as an unpatriotic extravagance.[4] The Tokyo Metropolitan Police, in cooperation with the Tokyo Meat Producers' Association, reduced domestic food consumption by declaring four days a month meatless days (*niku nashi hi*).[5]

Looking ahead to future manpower needs, the Bureau of Information and the home, education, and industry ministries ruled that henceforth children (*jidō*) would be considered "little citizens" (*shōkokumin*). Theater, film, music, and publishing enterprises were directed to create materials to guide "little citizens' moral development."[6] On April 21, the Tokyo Metropolitan Police disbanded audience support groups (*kōenkai*) and fan magazines for three popular musical theater actresses, citing "shameful behavior in wartime."[7] On December 1, one week before the start of the Pacific War, stiff luxury and consumption taxes were announced that, the Bureau of Information piously proclaimed, "will absorb surplus purchasing power of the general public." Could it be a coincidence that thereafter Treasury Ministry income increased fivefold?

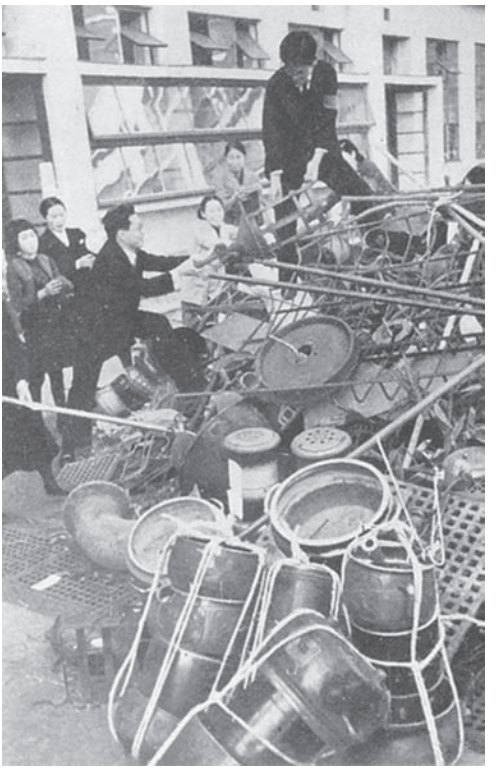


Fig. 6.1. Teachers and pupils heap scrap metal into a "resource mountain" in the wealthy Azabu neighborhood in Tokyo. (From Hiratsuka Seishō, ed., *Mokugekisha ga kataru Shōwashi, Taiheiyō sensō*, 6)

A new theater admission tax of 80 percent brought the cost of a first-class kabuki seat to nine yen including tax, or ten times the price of a movie ticket.[8]

Independent Kabuki Troupes

The war was loosening some old bonds and disturbing some old ways. Indeed, the war stimulated changes, major and minor, throughout society, including the world of kabuki. Shōchiku had always sought to maximize its managerial control over kabuki actors. It had strongly resisted, for example, Ichikawa Ennosuke II's several efforts to establish independent kabuki troupes in previous decades. But in 1935 and 1936, Shōchiku had supported matinee performances of the Japan Actors' Academy that let young kabuki actors and *shingeki* actresses blow off steam playing such unusual roles as frontier whores and horse thieves in *The Shewing-up of Blanco Posnet*, George Bernard Shaw's bumptious tale of lawlessness and lynching in the American west.[9] Nor had Shōchiku objected in 1940 when, shortly after Ichikawa Sadanji II's sudden death, Ennosuke assumed leadership of Sadanji's troupe. It had been rumored that En-

nosuke would take the troupe to full independence, but this did not happen. Shōchiku retained financial control, even as Ōtani Takejirō disingenuously announced Ennosuke's freedom. The reorganized troupe was rechristened New Commando Kabuki (Shin'ei Kabuki), using a term often encountered in war reports. "New commando" suggested the group possessed strong fighting spirit and a willingness to take risks. Ōtani prophesied the troupe would "make a new start to serve the country through the stage."[10] And indeed, Ennosuke and his New Commando Kabuki Troupe staged most of the new war plays that reached kabuki stages in Tokyo in 1941.

In the spirit of young men eager to go off to war, young actors were also able to use the government's war goals to serve themselves. One does not have to be a cynic to imagine the excitement that young Kansai actors Nakamura Gannosuke I, Nakamura Fukutarō, and Ichikawa Aratarō felt when they tore up their Shōchiku contracts in September and formed an independent group, New Commando Kabuki (Shin'ei Kabuki), using the same name as Ennosuke's troupe in Tokyo. With good grace Shōchiku chairman Shirai Matsujirō accepted the actors' "complete divorce from the company." Members firmly pledged "not mere entertainment of traditional plays but the creation of a New Order on the stage . . . to serve the state." The group continued throughout the war years, mounting some fifty kabuki programs in smaller theaters outside of Shōchiku control.[11] Members of the troupe attained one objective: they broke out of Shōchiku's orbit. But the troupe took few risks "to serve the state," and overall its programs hardly differed from Shōchiku's Grand Kabuki.

In another example of Shōchiku's slackening control, for nearly ten years a group of Kansai kabuki actors led by Ichikawa Kodayū II had worked together with *shinpa* actors and actresses performing Combined New and Old Drama. In this tense period before the Pearl Harbor attack, members felt the need to alter their identity. They informed supporters in October of their "unanimous patriotic theater decision" to change their group's name to the Public Service Drama (Kōsei Geki) Troupe and to rededicate themselves to "creating a New Citizens' Drama." The troupe included professional Nagauta, Tokiwazu, and Takemoto musicians who provided traditional kabuki music in performance.[12]

Kabuki and Citizens' Drama

Editors of *Engei gahō* dutifully followed the government's propaganda line exhorting citizens to fortify National Spirit. The lead New Year editorial in 1941 was bracketed by slogans in bold type: "ASSIST IMPERIAL RULE" and

"PRACTICE IMPERIAL LOYALTY." The editorial itself consisted of a laundry list of pledges. We might call them New Year's resolutions for the theater world:

> Let every Japanese citizen dutifully uphold the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere.
> Let wholesome theatrical culture promote National Spirit.
> This is our mission and creed: establish Theatrical Patriotism greater than before.
> Build the New Citizens' Drama whose time has come.

The editors went on to praise kabuki, "unmatched in the world," and then dismissed it for being old-fashioned and in need of "preservation."[13] This was a standard formulation of ambivalence that critics fell back on in their attempts to position kabuki within the government's New Order Movement. The concept of the New Order was ill defined, and theater's role was variously described by the heavy guns trundled up to make the government's case. Fuwa Suketoshi, head of the Theater and Film Guidance Section, Culture Division, Bureau of Information, believed that a Theater Law would "spur realization of the New Order." He said the government should build a National Theater Academy and a National Theater Study Center to "cultivate knowledge of wholesome theater," but he did not say where the money would come from.[14]

In official statements such as these, we can see that Iizuka Tomoichirō's plan for Citizens' Drama within the New Order had fully entered the mainstream of government rhetoric. Citizens' Drama had been created with the promise of carrying forward the government's National Spirit Movement. But after seven years of efforts, the goal remained nebulous. Observers held conflicting opinions. Critic Fujita Hiroshi was optimistic: "Everywhere you look new plays are going strong." But Ōyama Isao, chief theorist for Citizens' Drama, wailed: "Chaos prevails in the theater world, and everyone is waiting for the emergence of a new modern drama (*atarashiki gendai geki*)."[15] Gonda Yasunosuke, a prolific writer on cultural affairs and a member of the Ministry of Education Citizens' Entertainment Betterment Committee, reiterated his often-expressed opinion that because Japanese theater was estranged from citizens' daily lives, a new type of Citizens' Entertainment (*kokumin goraku*) must be created.[16] One could hardly argue against these sweeping platitudes. Barak Kushner says of Gonda's other writings on the subject, "Gonda meant that the time had come for the nation to think about entertainment not as an individual pursuit of amusement but as a means of uniting groups, and ultimately the nation, toward a common goal."[17] Or, as Iizuka said more bluntly: "Production

management must be wrested from the hands of commercial producers and entrusted to government authority."[18] This, however, proved an illusive goal. Only in 1944, when the nation fell under emergency rule, did Citizens' Drama come close to replacing entrenched capitalist ownership in theater.

If others were ambivalent about kabuki's place in the New Order, Iizuka was not. In 1941, he dismissed kabuki totally. He prophesied that kabuki would not survive the death of the current generation of ancient stars, and he welcomed kabuki's demise: "It is kabuki's historical mission to grow old and wither away, thus allowing a new form called Citizens' Drama to be born in its place."[19] Iizuka was among good company in predicting kabuki's demise. When the China war began, the distinguished kabuki scholar Tsubouchi Shōyō observed: "Kabuki is in the process of dying. . . . Do not feel regret when crafty old kabuki has expired."[20] Iizuka expected that a new genre of plays would replace traditional kabuki pieces.[21] In this he was wrong: new plays were added to programs without forcing out the old repertory. Although kabuki did not die as Iizuka and Tsubouchi thought it would, the search for a new and spiritually pure theater did not benefit kabuki.

Kabuki in the New Order

In January 1941, Ōtani Takejirō, writing as president of Shōchiku, president of the Producers' Association, and member of the Central Committee of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, publicly pledged the theater world to follow the government's lead in creating a new wartime theater. Hereafter, he said, producers would stage only wholesome and cheerful (*kenzen meirō*) entertainment that fits into the National Policy of the New Order: "Together, we producers will exert all our efforts without reserve to improve what must be improved and to correct what must be corrected, forming one great wing of assistance to imperial rule."[22] The vagueness of Ōtani's promise fits the vacuity of the government's New Order Movement.

In February the Ōsaka Producers' Association transformed itself into the Producers' Patriotic Association to better support New Order theater in the Kansai region. The new group's statement of purpose followed standard boilerplate: "cooperate with national policies," "strengthen support on the home front," and "determine a new road for Japanese theater founded on Japanese Spirit."[23]

In June, the League of Performing Arts and Culture in Tokyo presided over a Performing Arts Exploration Congress designed to guide theater into government-approved channels. Kabuki representatives — actor Ichikawa Ennosuke,

scholars Kawatake Shigetoshi and Iizuka Tomoichirō, and playwrights Kubota Mantarō and Kimura Kinka — sat through lengthy roundtable discussions with the chief of the Performance Section of the Metropolitan Police. The congress recommended raising the low artistic standards of actors (to weed out undesirable actors) and centralizing script censorship in Tokyo (to allow stricter police control). These were old ideas that took on special urgency in 1941, the tenth year of the war with China. Most worrisome for kabuki was the recommendation that existing play scripts should be reexamined, "to bring them in accord with values of the New Order."[24] Reexamination could result in an official blacklist that would suppress some of kabuki's most interesting plays, something that had never been proposed before. Since 1937, Iizuka and Ōyama had mounted many attacks on traditional kabuki. These, however, had been personal expressions of opinion. It would be a serious matter if the feared Special Higher Police formalized a kabuki blacklist.

Kabuki Initiatives on Behalf of the War

At this tense and uncertain time when kabuki's position in the New Order was not at all secure, the kabuki world displayed its loyalty to the nation in large and small ways. At the urging of the Navy Ministry and the Bureau of Information, Matsumoto Kōshirō VII and Bandō Mitsugorō VIII headlined an all-star program of "sea dances" in honor of Marine Day, July 20. The single performance was held outdoors in Hibiya Park for ordinary Tokyo residents.[25] In October, kabuki's foremost actors recorded "the characteristic stage dialogue in the orthodox version of *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*." The complete play was made available for purchase in "an attractive album" of twenty-six long-play records from the Victor Talking Machine Company of Japan.[26]

The physical center of Shōchiku's patriotic efforts on behalf of the war was the ornately beautiful Kabuki-za in the Ginza (Fig. 6.2). Under President Ōtani's direction, between 1939 and 1943, the Kabuki-za produced a score of special programs to entertain important guests and to memorialize unique occasions. To suggest a few of these, proceeds of a performance on February 24, 1939, were donated to the Wounded Veterans' Relief Organization, and on March 22, 1942, *Moritsuna's Battle Camp* and *Tied to a Pole* were staged for the Manchurian State Minister and his party.[27] The Kabuki-za schedule accommodated special wartime film showings of *Special Report Corrigidor, Special Report Palembang, South Wind*, *Southern Military Base,* and *Malaya Battle Report*, to mention a few. In August 1942, a "Special Memorial Photographic Exhibition: Record of the Malay War" filled the theater's main lobby.[28]

Fig. 6.2. The elegant exterior of the Kabuki-za, West Ginza, Tokyo, the main Shōchiku theater dedicated to Grand Kabuki. (Author's collection)

Shōchiku shouldered the expense of staging these special programs, and it lost normal income when it preempted regularly scheduled performances.

At this time, major commercial theaters changed programs monthly. As an example, the Kabuki-za would offer a program of six or seven plays staged once daily for twenty-five or twenty-six days and then would close for four or five days to prepare the next month's program. Responding to wartime exigencies, President Ōtani announced a "New Order of Theatrical Production" to begin at the Kabuki-za in January 1941. Each program, he said, would run for two months or approximately fifty days: "We believe this plan resolutely follows the intent of government theater regulations. . . . A long run will result in lower ticket prices."[29] Production expenses would also drop, so even with lowered ticket prices, a longer run would increase profits. As advertised, the "New Year Grand Kabuki Program Celebrating 2,601 Years of Imperial Rule" ran for fifty straight days in January–February at the Kabuki-za and the late-spring production, April and May, ran for forty days. In Osaka, Shōchiku producers staged several two-month programs as well.

Did this tinkering with performance schedules constitute a serious response to Japan's gathering military and political crisis? Always the curmudgeon, Iizuka scoffed at Shōchiku's patriotic theater policy, calling it a sham: "For a very long time the Kabuki-za has followed its own policy of 'long runs' by repeating over and over the same small repertory of *The Subscription List*

and *The Village School*. . . . Even Kikugorō will become a mere laborer or office worker, forced to act in forty or fifty consecutive performances without break."[30] Iizuka tellingly disputed Shōchiku's claim, endlessly trumpeted, that the company was committed to preserving the traditional repertory. Iizuka pointed out that Shōchiku theaters staged only a small part of the traditional kabuki repertory, repeating ad infinitum only plays that were sure to draw large audiences and earn Shōchiku good profits. Shōchiku avoids, Iizuka claimed, hundreds of other excellent kabuki plays in the traditional repertory. These plays along with their unique and beautiful acting forms (*kata*) are being lost forever, he said.[31] Speaking for kabuki actors, Matsumoto Kōshirō VII said he was troubled by a fifty-day run because of two dangers. When actors get sick will they be forced to continue and so damage their health? And won't actors go stale playing the same roles without break for fifty days? Kōshirō announced he would perform only during March (a normal twenty-five-day run).[32] But Iizuka and Kōshirō need not have worried about Shōchiku's "New Order of Theatrical Production." In the summer, the Kabuki-za and other Shōchiku theaters quietly slipped back into their old system of one-month runs.[33]

More important, Shōchiku advertised a "New System Two-Part Grand Kabuki" program at the Kabuki-za in which the day's bill was spread over separate matinee and evening programs. Under a two-part system (*nibusei*), Shōchiku was able to sell the same theater seat twice a day, earning twice the income while producing the same number of plays as before. It was brilliant financial sleight-of-hand.[34] Today most large commercial theaters present two-a-day programs.

The kabuki-dominated Greater Japan Actors' Association played a major part in civilian fund-raising in support of the war in the tense months before the start of the Pacific War. The association donated to the army and navy ministries proceeds from fifty specially arranged performances. Famous kabuki stars were extremely effective fund-raisers. Kikugorō and his troupe raised ¥13,000 at the end of September by adding three special performances at the 4,500-seat Kokusai Gekijō in Asakusa.[35] Eventually kabuki actors raised enough money to buy fifteen fighter planes for the military forces. On November 15, actors symbolically christened one of the donated planes "Actors' Wings" (Haiyūgo) and formally presented it to the Navy Ministry at Haneda Airport near Tokyo. At outdoor ceremonies, Ōtani pledged the theatrical world would prepare the nation for any military contingency. As part of the presentation, Kikugorō, Kichiemon, Kōshirō, and Mitsugorō proudly danced *Auspicious Sanba*, a ceremonial kabuki piece "never before seen in a similar ceremony."[36]

On December 3, five days before the air attack on Pearl Harbor, the Actors' Association donated to the Army Ministry yet another airplane christened "The Actor's Wings."[37] And two weeks later Actors' Association chair Ichimura Uzaemon wrote in *Engei gahō* of his hope that these airplanes were now "taking part in brave actions in the South Pacific" and wondered if they had sunk any British or American battleships.[38]

Government Guidance of Kabuki

The year 1941 saw the inauguration of two dovetailing government programs through which "Centralization of Culture in the Big Cities Is to Be Dissolved." In January, playwright Kishida Kunio, speaking as director of the Culture Division of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, explained that a "New Rural Culture Is Being Projected": "Plans for establishing culture committees in rural districts are aimed at contributing toward the New Order of life and diffusing real cultural life among the people."[39] The plan included moving playwrights, actors, and directors out of Tokyo and Osaka and having them work with local artists, all with the aim of raising the cultural level of farmers, fishermen, and lumbermen. While there is no evidence that any urban artists moved to the countryside in 1941 or 1942, Kishida's commitment to raise rural cultural standards laid a base for the bureau's second initiative.

In June, the Bureau of Information, in conjunction with the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, inaugurated the League of Touring Theaters and organized a special Theater Congress to tout the benefits of urban troupes touring the countryside. From the beginning, some kabuki actors began working with the league.[40] As early as 1937, the army and navy had prevailed on a very few theater troupes to give morale performances for soldiers and sailors at military bases. Organizers of the theater congress in 1941 explained that it was not enough to visit a military hospital once or twice a year. More theater companies must participate and more performances must be given at this crucial time in Japan's history. Workers behind the guns (*jūgo*) in factories and mines, and farmers and fishermen deserve wholesome entertainment where they live and work (Fig. 6.3). As a start, Ichimura Uzaemon, sixty-seven years old, played with his troupe at the Hitachi coal mines, while in Osaka, kabuki actors pledged to entertain 35,000 industrial workers in the Kansai region.[41] From its inception until the end of the war, the League of Touring Theaters proved to be the government's most effective theater program.

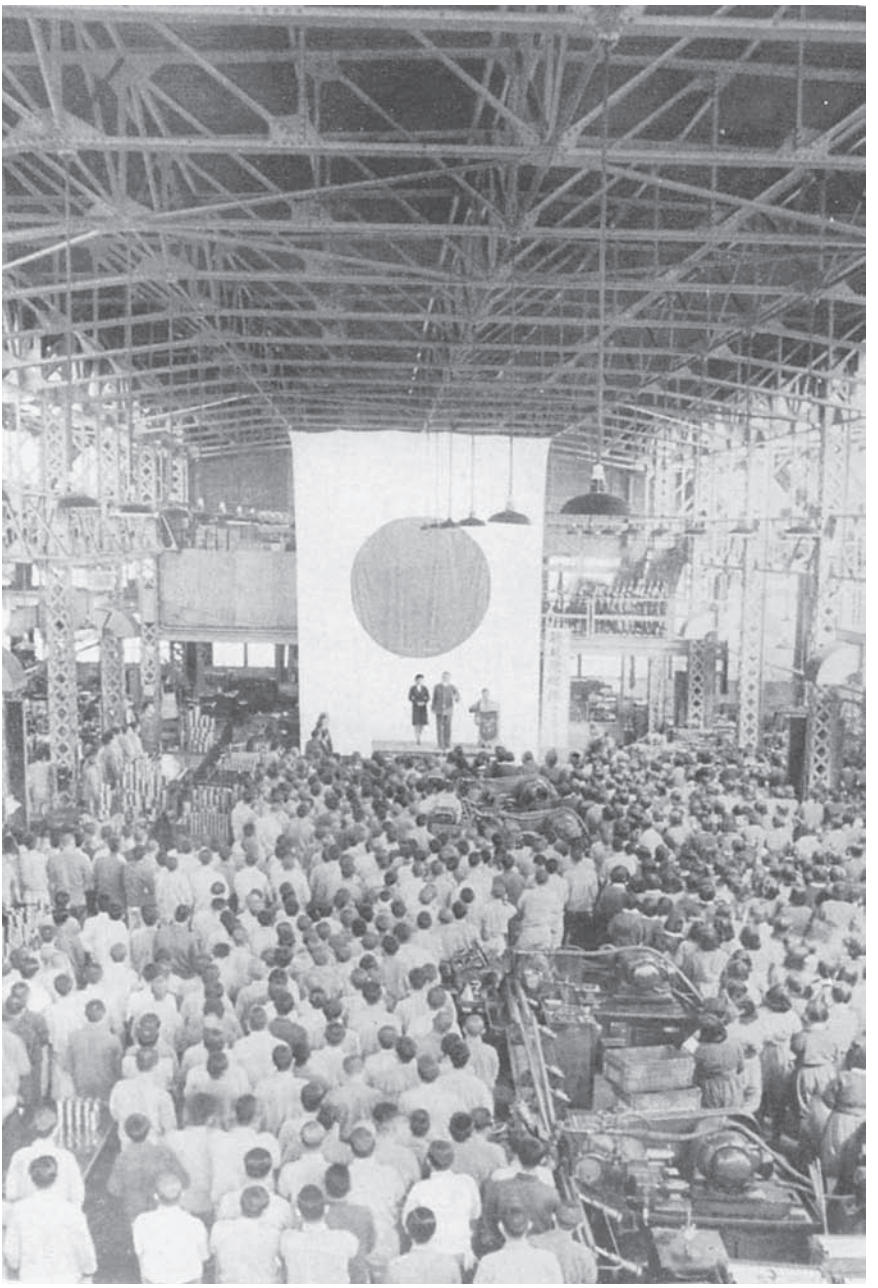


Fig. 6.3. "Civilian factories were converted to military use one after the other." A comic *manzai* team from a Workplace Encouragement Squad performs for workers before a large national flag within a cavernous munitions factory. (From Hiratsuka Seishō, ed., *Mokugekisha ga kataru Shōwashi, Taiheiyō senso*, 6)

New Plays and War Plays

The constant rhetoric in 1941 calling for new plays to suit wartime needs could not be matched by reality. A kabuki spectator looking for even one new overnight pickle play about the China war would have been disappointed. Through 1941, Japanese military and civilian leaders were wholly occupied with planning the nation's Southern Advance. Their intention was a massive invasion of Southeast Asia and the western Pacific. In preparation, 400,000 men were transferred to staging areas in Hainan, Taiwan, and Indochina, including five crack divisions drawn from the China front.[42] The quiescent, defanged military units remaining in China in 1941 provided no splendid victories or noble sacrifices for kabuki artists to dramatize.

In all, only nine new plays at kabuki theaters offered even oblique commentary on Japan's Sacred War in 1941. Seven of these were new-history plays that looked to the past to understand the present. The most important was *Beyond Obligation and Revenge* (discussed in detail in Chapter 11). The irrepressibly patriotic Gōda Toku delivered two new-history dramas to Ichikawa Ennosuke for his New Commando Kabuki Troupe. In *After the Portsmouth Conference*, at the Naka-za in April, Gōda demonstrated that America and Britain had deprived Japan of the fruits of its victory in the Russo-Japanese War and were responsible for igniting the present war in China.[43]

A month later, the Navy Ministry commissioned Gōda to write *Submarine No. 6* to honor Japan's 36th Navy Day (Fig. 6.4). The New Commando Kabuki Troupe's staging of the script that May was named a Citizens' Drama Participating Production. Gōda turned for his plot to a tragic event thirty years in the past (and memorialized by novelist Natsume Sōseki in the *Asahi* newspaper). On April 15, 1910, officers and crew of *Submarine No. 6* suffocated when their boat could not surface after a training dive. The submarine was raised the following day and placed on display at the Naval Submarine Academy at Etajima, near Hiroshima.[44]

Trapped with no escape possible, Captain Sakuma, played by Ichikawa Ennosuke II, calmly directs his crew while he keeps a log of the mechanical problems so these can be rectified in future submarines (see Fig. 11.5). Captain Sakuma assures his dying crew that their sacrifice will not be in vain: "Because of your loyalty, our country's submarine fleet will be improved. . . . You are showing true devotion to the emperor!"[45] The Navy Ministry Information Office intended *Submarine No. 6* to be an instructional propaganda drama (*keimō senden geki*) that would initiate audiences into the inner workings of the submarine service. Scenes authentically depicted officers and crew checking

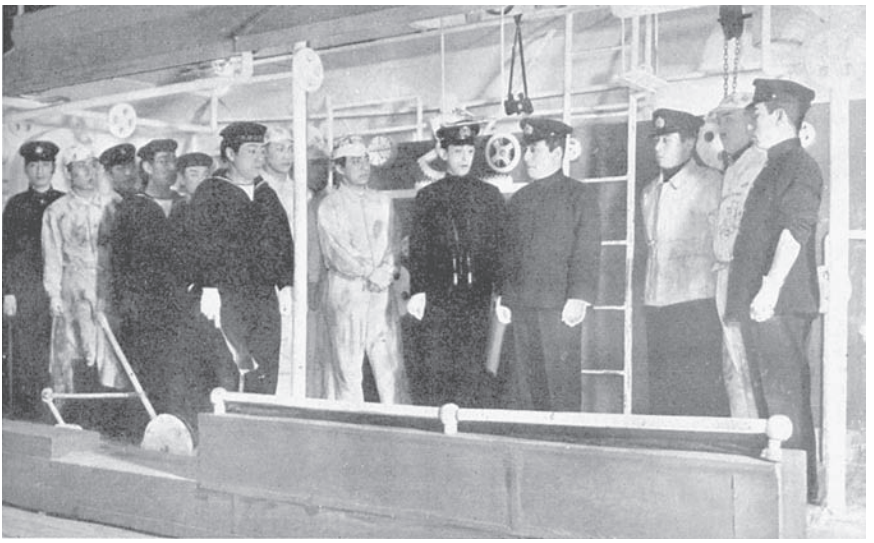


Fig. 6.4. Gōda Toku's *Submarine No. 6,* staged by Ichikawa Ennosuke II's New Commando Troupe, Ōsaka Kabuki-za, May 1941. Ennosuke as Captain Sakuma (third from right) tells his crew to prepare for death. (From *Engei gahō*, May 1942)

valves and gauges. Ichikawa Ennosuke, Ichikawa Chūsha VIII, Morita Kanya XIV, and other kabuki actors realistically portrayed the crew's slow asphyxiation, so agonized "it would make the devil weep." Indeed, with the mournful melody "If to the Sea" ("Umi yukaba") playing quietly in the background, the final scene reduced audiences to tears. As one deeply moved critic wrote, "The scene is so pathetic, in truth it is unbearable to watch."[46]

When Ennosuke revived the play a year later at the Tōkyō Gekijō, a second reviewer was sympathetic but critical: "Despite the sincere work of playwright and actors, this is simply a sentimental tearjerker (*onamida chōdai geki*)." Instead of this dark story, the playwright should have written "a beautiful tragedy" in honor of Navy Day.[47] And finally, Gōda's script, retitled *Spirit of the Sea,* was given a third production in 1942 at the Kado-za, by Ichikawa Kodayū II and the Public Service Troupe. When Captain Sakuma and his crew "died swallowing their tears," audiences were reminded of the "nine Special Attack Corps submarine officers who gave their lives at Pearl Harbor and amazed the world."[48] Even so, acerbic critic Oka Onitarō destroyed this patriotic production with a quip: "Simplistic in plot, unclear in dialogue, and uninteresting as a drama, the play was fated to sink beneath the waves along with the submarine."[49]

In a New Commando Grand Kabuki production at the Tōkyō Gekijō in October, Ennosuke played a magisterial, farsighted scholar of the eighteenth

Fig. 6.5. *A Sailor's Tale of a Sea Nation* by Nagata Kōkichi, Tōkyō Gekijō, October 1941. Mid-Tokugawa era scholar Hayashi Shihei (Ichikawa Ennosuke II) is illegally on board a Dutch ship in Nagasaki harbor. The Dutch captain of the ship (Ichikawa Danshirō III) protects Hayashi from being discovered by wrapping him in his cloak. (From *Engei gahō*, November 1941)

century, Hayashi Shihei, an early advocate of a strong Japanese navy (Fig. 6.5). Nagata Kōkichi's *A Sailor's Tale of a Sea Nation* was sponsored by the Navy Ministry and was a Bureau of Information Citizens' Drama Participating Play Selection.[50] In the final scene, Hayashi, on his deathbed, continues to draw up plans for a strong navy to protect Japan, a "sea nation," from foreign incursions. Further, Ennosuke played the sober hero Kuranosuke in two new Akō clan vendetta dramas, *Judgment of the Righteous Akō Retainers,* also by Nagata Kōkichi, at the Ōsaka Kabuki-za in February, and at the Tōkyō Gekijō that November, *One Day at Sengaku Temple,* the eighth installment in Mayama Seika's ten-play cycle, *Loyal Retainers of the Genroku Era*. Finally, at the Kabuki-za, Matsumoto Kōshirō VII starred in the premiere of Uno Nobuo's *Spring Frost,* yet another reworking of the Akō vendetta story.

The only kabuki play about contemporary life in 1941 was the feel-good home front drama *The National Anthem: Its First Playing* by Kimura Takeshi. Critic Fujita Hiroshi recalled his excitement seeing the play at the Tōkyō Gekijō when he was a schoolboy. With great energy and sincerity, Ichikawa Jukai III acted a young, patriotic music student who wanted to play Japan's national anthem, "Kimigayo," on his clarinet. The war with America had not

yet started, so he was allowed to play the anthem as a patriotic gesture, even though the clarinet was an "enemy-made musical instrument."[51] It is not an exaggeration to say that in 1941 Ennosuke's entrepreneurship and the writing efforts of Gōda and Nagata were almost entirely responsible for reminding kabuki audiences that Japan was at war.

The Vanguard Theater continued to be a special case. In 1941 its members completed their about-face from progressive ideals to extreme Japanese nationalism. The extent of this sea change in political stance can be gleaned from the troupe's description of its tenth anniversary party held in May: "At the party celebrating our tenth anniversary, men of progressive thought who had helped us in the past did not show their faces. However, numerous officials were in attendance representing the Bureau of Information, the army, and the navy."[52] Members committed themselves to accepting "Total Discipline" in order to "Unite Artistry with Popular Appeal," omitting any reference to social goals.

The Vanguard Theater had been healing its relations with Shōchiku for several years. Shōchiku had occasionally allowed the troupe to use the Kado-za in Osaka and the Dai Ichi Gekijō (formerly the Shin Kabuki-za) in Tokyo, where publicists advertised the "First Vanguard Production Sponsored by Shōchiku" in June 1938.[53] The degree to which the troupe had returned to Shōchiku's good graces can be seen in three events that occurred in 1941. First, President Ōtani Takejirō contracted with the Vanguard Troupe to restage Mayama Seika's now completed *Loyal Retainers of the Genroku Era* cycle of ten plays that Ichikawa Sadanji II had initially staged under Shōchiku sponsorship. Second, one year had passed since Ichikawa Sadanji's death. Who would succeed to Sadanji's name? Shōchiku, in the person of President Ōtani, suggested that Kawarazaki Chōjūrō, now playing the main role of Kuranosuke in the *Loyal Retainers of the Genroku Era* revivals, should succeed to the name of Ichikawa Sadanji III. Chōjūrō said he was not interested, indicating how secure he and the troupe now were. Chōjūrō *was* interested in becoming the next Ichikawa Danjūrō (according to colleague Nakamura Kan'emon), but that greatest of all kabuki names was beyond his grasp.[54] And third, Shōchiku gave financial support and opened its theaters to all of the troupe's major productions for the next three years. Throughout these changes, the Vanguard Theater remained an independent organization.

Kabuki and Play Contests

The Bureau of Information celebrated its first year of operation in August 1941. Bureau director Itō Nobumi noted that theater was an important means

to "reach the masses" in support of the nation's supreme task of constructing a mutual prosperity sphere in Greater East Asia.[55] The small number of appropriate war plays in early 1941 seems to have spurred the bureau to action. Theater guidance officials in the Performance Section of the Cultural Division of the bureau explained to producers and theater owners their plans to give prizes to stimulate the writing of plays with appropriate Citizens' Drama themes. Shōchiku official Endō Tameharu pointed out that in traditional theater forms like kabuki, performance was as important as the script. Agreeing with Endō, the bureau decided to run separate contests for productions and for play scripts.[56] The bureau strongly promoted its Citizens' Drama contests in 1941, 1942, and 1943, "in order to attain the establishment of healthy national entertainment in wartime."[57] Similar contests were organized in Korea and Taiwan to reward "Citizens' Dramas" written in the colonies that appropriately expressed "Japanese Spirit."[58] These were Japan's oldest colonies, where Japanization of language and arts was well advanced.

The Bureau of Information Citizens' Drama Recommended Productions contest in 1941 was intended to reward theater troupes for including appropriate Citizens' Dramas in their programs. On behalf of the bureau, Kishida Kunio explained contest details to assembled playwrights and troupe leaders on April 9.[59] Using ornate bureaucratic language, a further announcement said the list would identify "Citizens' Dramas that motivate total concentration of national strength directed to the successful conclusion of the war."[60] That first year kabuki was a major player in the contest, with nine troupes submitting productions. Judges named six kabuki entries Board of Information Citizens' Drama Participating Plays.[61] One traditional production was *Mount Imo and Mount Se,* featuring Nakamura Baigyoku III and Nakamura Kichiemon I. The grand prize was awarded to Matsumoto Kōshirō VII's production at the Kabuki-za of Uno Nobuo's *Spring Frost*. For some reason, the judges withheld the ¥3,000 award money, a small fortune at the time. A critic noted, "The script is certainly not one of the author's masterpieces," and "unfortunately it is not a very interesting Citizens' Drama selection either."[62] But from the bureau's point of view, this initial contest was a success in terms of widespread, enthusiastic participation.[63]

A second contest for "Citizens' Drama Play Script Recruitment" was intended to stimulate the writing of new plays that could make a specific contribution to the war effort. Contest judges the first year were heavy hitters on the theatrical circuit: prominent playwrights Kishida Kunio, Hasegawa Shin, Kubota Mantarō, Kikuchi Kan, and Satomi Ton, and important scholars and critics Ihara Toshirō, Iizuka Tomoichirō, Kawatake Shigetoshi, and Miyake

Shūtarō.[64] This was the same small revolving clique whose names appeared again and again on government theater committees; they were experts, and they were dependable and cooperative. As Uno Nobuo remembered the situation, the Bureau of Information set strict guidelines: "Nostalgia would not do, carnage would not do, and anything unhealthy was absolutely forbidden. A script had to be cheerful and wholesome."[65]

The first year's grand prize went to *The Cultivator*, by Akizuki Keita, about the sacrifices and pleasures of rural life. Although the number of scripts received (122) was small, submissions came from authors living in Tokyo, Yokohama, Osaka, Manchuria, north China, Taiwan, and Korea. Play settings ranged from Japan, Manchuria, and China to Thailand, Hawai'i, Singapore, and even the mainland United States. Citizens' Drama Movement publicist Ōyama Isao overlooked, or did not notice, the international cast to the submissions in order to praise the "Japanese Spirit" found in *The Cultivator* and other new Citizens' Dramas:

> War plays, home front plays, and national policy plays using the battle front and life behind the guns as material are being produced in abundance since the [China] Incident. Meanwhile, the previous pieces that depicted love affairs of the propertied class and life among petty merchants have disappeared without fanfare. One after the other, plays are appearing that honor the Japanese people's ethnic consciousness and portray the healthy emotions experienced by workers and villagers in their daily lives.[66]

In parallel with bureau actions, in 1941 Shōchiku's high-profile Kabuki Investigation Committee inaugurated its own play contest to encourage new kabuki playwriting "in support of national policy (*kokusaku*)" and to "meet the needs of the times for healthy entertainment."[67] Neophyte authors submitted more than 1,100 unstaged kabuki scripts. Working full time for several months, the committee chose six prize-winning entries. The grand prize winner, *Beyond Obligation and Revenge* by amateur playwright Suga Kanjirō, was announced at the Kabuki-za on November 12 (the play is discussed in Chapter 11).[68]

The Vanguard Troupe also conducted a play contest of its own in 1941 to find new kabuki scripts. Plays were expected to exhibit a "bright and healthy social interest" in line with Bureau of Information policy and be appropriate for the Vanguard Theater's company of kabuki actors. From a flood of five hundred entries that fans and amateur authors submitted, judges awarded cash prizes and promises of production to three entries. Two were new-history plays, *De-*

parting for the Front and *The Town's Commanding Officer*. But Vanguard actors did not stage the winning plays, presumably because the scripts were not good enough.[69] Nor did the Vanguard Troupe hold another play contest.

New Plays in Nō

Nō artists, like kabuki playwrights, were asked to develop new plays in support of spiritual mobilization. Responding to a request by the Greater Japan Association Honoring Loyal Souls of the War Dead, actors and musicians of the Kanze School, led by school head Kanze Motomasa, created the modern nō play *Loyal Souls of the War Dead* in 1941 to honor the Warrior Gods (*gunshin*) killed in the present war. In the play, the personification of the Spirit of the War Dead mysteriously appears at the behest of the spirits of recently fallen soldiers and sailors. He announces himself, "I am the Guardian Spirit who dwells in the Nation of Eight Islands," thus invoking the country's Shinto creation myth. The chorus sings, "Destroy the enemy of the Land of the Rising Sun" as the spirit dances a fierce battle against Japan's enemies.[70] He prays to the imperial ancestors, who send a Wind of the Gods, or kamikaze, that destroys the enemy and saves the nation.

The performance history of *Loyal Souls of the War Dead* is exceptional. Unlike most nō plays, given a single performance every few years, *Loyal Souls of the War Dead* was performed four times at the Peers' Club in Tokyo on November 11 for distinguished guests and members of the imperial family (a record for consecutive performances of a nō play). Kanze Motomasa and Kanze Tetsunojō alternated playing the Guardian Spirit. Other actors performed the new drama in Kyoto, Osaka, and Nagoya from November 21 to 24.[71] It is surely no coincidence that this concerted propagandizing of a play dedicated to the war dead occurred in the month before Japan began its war with America and Britain. Other performances were given through the winter and spring as part of a general effort by nō actors to stage more war-related plays. An article in the *Kanze* magazine noted that nō artists were staging "new dedicatory nō plays . . . out of the boundless gratitude residing in the hearts of one hundred million imperial subjects for the magnificent victories won by the Imperial Forces."[72] For citizens who could not witness *Loyal Souls of the War Dead* live, Victor Records released the play in a seven-record set.[73] And in 1942, the text was translated into Italian and published in Rome, "eloquently introducing the Japanese spirit to foreigners."[74]

Stricter Censorship

As the nation prepared for a larger, harder war, government control of theater was everywhere strengthened. The most obvious form of control was formal script censorship. As before, Japan's decentralized censorship system did not function in a consistent way. In February 1941, the Osaka Municipal Peace Preservation Office of the police announced "a move away from previous harsh suppression" of kabuki and other scripts and the intention to freely approve "richly artistic plays" that reflect history. "We will approve scripts that are unrelated to the current emergency as long as there are no scenes that flout decency, such as gambling, blackmail . . . , or swordplay. Further, we will approve even Chikamatsu's love suicide dramas if they teach moral precepts and do not extol death or the ideology of love over all (*ren'ai shijōshugi*)."[75] In the tense domestic climate of 1941, the relaxation of censorship in Osaka did not last long.

Tsuwatari Hajime, head of the Censorship Division of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police, wrote in early 1941 that drama must continue the moral education (*kyōshin*) that children first absorbed in ethics classes in primary school: revere the emperor and suppress individual desires so you can serve the nation (*messhi hōkō*). Tsuwatari cited *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* as a morally wholesome drama: difficulties are overcome, the feelings of Japanese characters are exactly expressed, and the story brims with Japanese Spirit (*Nihonteki seishin*). In contrast, *The Country Samurai* "is inappropriate and it should not be staged today because it lacks morality." Many plays, he concluded, need to be "reexamined," a euphemism for suppressed.[76]

The Tokyo Metropolitan Police reported a tally of their play script investigations carried out under Performance Control Regulations during 1941, the first year in which the Citizens' Drama Movement was firmly established. The numbers seem to show that the government's policy of encouraging wholesome Citizens' Drama was working: the censor passed without change 95 percent of 3,081 scripts submitted that year and ordered a mere 0.33 percent withdrawn (*torisage*). In about 10 percent of the scripts police identified inappropriate material that either disturbed public peace or contravened traditional morality.[77] The report also tells us that old drama (*kyūgeki*) scripts, primarily kabuki, made up only 8 percent of those submitted.

Peace Preservation officials in Kyoto made a concerted sweep of city theaters between July 1 and 5 that turned up twenty minor breaches of censorship. The punishments meted out were lenient — six theaters received warnings, thirteen were rebuked, and one paid a small fine. Nonetheless officials had

demonstrated vigilance on behalf of national morality and, of course, the war. More important, the violations showed "the need for a Theater Law and an Entertainment Law similar to the present Film Law."[78]

Information officials constantly urged producers and writers to exercise careful self-censorship as a means of avoiding censorship rejection. Indeed, a theater artist could not expect to survive in the profession without practicing voluntary self-restraint (*jishuku*). To cite just one example in 1941, on October 30, professional *rakugo* monologists agreed to cleanse their comic art of stories deemed offensive to national honor. A year before, they had ranked stories in the repertory from good to bad. Now, they selected fifty-three of the most abhorrent scripts, and they physically buried them in hole at the Honpō Temple in Asakusa in an act of voluntary interment (*jishuku maisō*).[79]

An Honest Account of War's Horror

By late 1941, at a time when Japan's leaders were deciding to embark on a hugely risky Southern Advance, it was extremely rare for Japanese media to offer a view of the war that differed from the government's official version. But glimpses of the terrible human cost of the war in China occasionally slipped past the censors. On October 10, 1941, the *Yomiuri* newspaper published an unusually candid account of the killing of one Chinese soldier under the chauvinistic banner headline "'Anti-Japanese Spirit' Stabbed to Death."[80] The author, Kawano Chūji, a former private first class in the army, tells us that he did not kill with a warrior's spirit, but as a terrified human being:

> I killed a man. He was an ordinary person in every way, a Chinese whom I did not hate. . . . No sooner had I jumped into the trench than he came toward me holding his bayonet. He tottered, rested against the muddy trench wall, and stared at me with the most terrifying expression. Both eyes were wide open. . . . How dauntless and determined he looked. His serenity frightened me. Before his death, he gazed into my eyes. For however long the war goes on, his exhausted yellow eyes, round nose, puffed lips, and face eerily glistening with sweat confront me. . . .
>
> He is a man who did not speak a word, yet his face floats before my eyes as if he was a close friend of many years. Each time I recall the Chinese soldier's face, I am attacked by a terrible sensation. Just as my face was the Chinese soldier's last sight in this world, without doubt his face looking at me will be my final image on this earth. . . . And so, I screamed and slashed with my bayonet with all my strength, sensing at that time a dull resistance. What swam before my eyes was the crumpled figure of the

> enemy. . . . As I did, a powerful physical tension was released and a tragic feeling that I cannot describe filled my breast: "I got him! I killed the enemy splendidly! I did it with my own hands!"

This is an honest and frightening account of how one man kills another. The roller-coaster emotions ring true, especially compared to the glorified clichés placed on the kabuki stage. Kawano then compared that traumatic experience with his present life as a university student, "reading books, taking notes, listening to lectures." He concludes by pondering the meaning of death in the war:

> My close friend Private First Class Fujii died an admirable death in battle (*rippa na senshi*). But, did the Chinese soldier I killed also die an "admirable death in battle"? Or did he die a dog's death (*inuji ni*) without reason? Nowadays, this is all I am able to think about. One death for many lives. That is war.[81]

Kawano's story of personal fear and psychological trauma must have angered the military. Perhaps Kawano was allowed to publish his sympathetic description of the Chinese soldier — dauntless and serene — because Chinese were members of Japan's pan-Asian family. Within two months, the Imperial Army would add to its list of enemies white American, British, Dutch, and Australian soldiers who would be pictured as nonhuman beasts. And the ferocious war to come would leave no space for the moral ambiguity of another Kawano.

Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki Moves toward War

In the summer and fall of 1941, tension at home precipitously increased. Many subjects of the emperor realized that a more terrible war was possible. Front-page headlines warned that the Western democracies were taking military measures against Japan and its Axis partners: in May, President Roosevelt declared a "time of national emergency." "American military patrols are to be beefed up in the Atlantic," and "agreement is reached on British aid to China." President Roosevelt declared that America was prepared to respond with "total war" against any attack.[82] When Hitler ordered the invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, many wondered if this was not the time for Japan to join the attack on communist Russia, the common enemy of the Axis powers. In late July, the emperor instructed Imperial Army and Navy units to occupy southern Indochina, in effect occupying all of French Indochina. A day later,

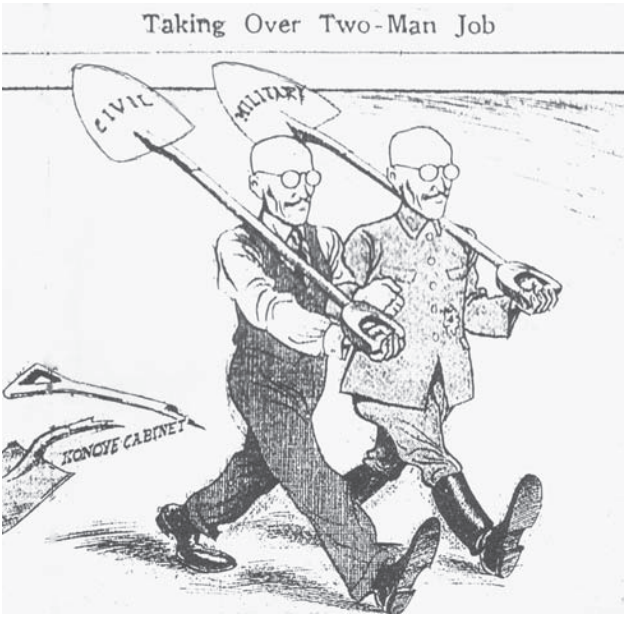


Fig. 6.6. Cartoon by Katō Etsurō in October 1941 showing General Tōjō Hideki filling two cabinet posts, prime minister and army minister, a usurpation of power according to critics. Later in the war Tōjō assumed other cabinet posts as well. (From *Japan Times & Advertiser*, October 20, 1941)

President Roosevelt responded by signing an executive order freezing Japanese assets in the United States. With this action, Japan could no longer purchase American oil, and the countdown to active warfare began.

On October 18, 1941, one of the strongest proponents of war with the United States, General Tōjō Hideki, replaced Prince Konoe as prime minister. He kept his post as army minister, thus assuming civil and military leadership of the government (Fig. 6.6). Tōjō's cabinet immediately set late November as the deadline to achieve a diplomatic solution with the United States. After that Japan would automatically initiate hostilities. These war plans were unknown to the Japanese public, but knowledgeable people weighed the likelihood that Japan was on collision course with the Anglo-American enemy. On the day before Pearl Harbor was attacked, Japanese newspapers set the stage by printing government warnings that "the implacable hostility of Britain and America" toward Japan's peaceful goals was bringing "violence to East Asia." Therefore, "the boiling rage of one hundred million has again reached the point of explosion."[83] The foundation had been laid to assert that Japan's attack on Hawai'i, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific islands was a defensive measure designed to protect the imperial nation and maintain peace in Asia (Fig. 6.7).

Preparations for the coming war extended to theater. In October, the Ministry of Education's Theater, Film, and Music Betterment Committee, having made its report, dissolved itself and was renamed the Specialists' Committee

Fig. 6.7. As war with the Allies became more likely, internal propaganda stressed Western bullying. In this 1941 propaganda poster, a frightened Japanese chick looks up at powerful American, British, and Dutch eagles circling overhead. The caption reads: "Are we afraid to defend our air space? Raise the chick to be strong!" (Courtesy Tanaka Yuko)

on Performance and Culture. The small committee was charged with enhancing the people's cultural level in "this New Era." Specifically, the Committee was to "reexamine" all the performing arts in order to "establish national entertainment policies." A newspaper headline declared that the committee would "Formulate Citizens' Entertainment for Wartime."[84] This was six weeks before the government's deadline for war.

In the days and weeks before the start of the Pacific War, theater workers lent their artistic panache to government policies. On November 28, 1941, ten days before Japanese bombs fell on Pearl Harbor, a newspaper photo showed British, German, and Italian ambassadors, "envoys of both belligerent sides in the present European conflict," sitting near each other at the Takarazuka Gekijō in Tokyo. The highly acclaimed production they were attending was *New Dance Creations*, by Korean dancer Ch'oe Sŭng-hŭi. A theater poster shows her wearing a traditional Korean black lacquered hat and high-waisted, flowing dress. She had just returned from a triumphant three-year tour of thirty cities in North America, South America, and Europe, where she performed solo programs of "oriental dances" (Fig. 6.8). Abroad she was identified

Fig. 6.8. Korean dancer Ch'oe Sŭng-hŭi (Japanese, Sai Shōki) was praised for melding Korean, Japanese, Chinese, Southeast Asian, and Western dance. Between 1941 and 1943 she created the role of a bodhisattva based on statuary representing the female form of Kannon (Guanyin). Perhaps there is also a hint of Cambodian *apsaras*, or heavenly maiden, in her conception. (Photo Soichi Sunami. Courtesy Reiko Sunami Kopelson)

as a Korean dancer, but in Tokyo and Osaka she was Sai Shōki, the "premiere danseuse of Japan."[85] As a citizen of the Japanese Empire, it was appropriate that her program included *Martial Spirit,* a modernized nō dance dedicated to "Japanese *bushidō.*" Japanese newspapers promoted her international status, saying her art possessed "the color of Japan, the form of China, and the line of Korea." Here was proof that Japan possessed an international culture in which Europe's "warring enmities were forgotten."[86]

Kabuki: Cultural Symbol in the War of Greater East Asia

Most observers near the end of 1941 believed that kabuki possessed exceptional, if flawed, political value (dissenters came mostly from the Citizens' Drama and *shingeki* camps). Surely the nation that created the impressive art of kabuki could be trusted with a leading cultural and political role in Asia.

On December 9, the independent producer Yokoyama Yui presented a spe-

cial program of kabuki dances for the foreign diplomatic community in Tokyo. The event was held in the elite Central Hall of Industry with an intermission dinner served at the spiffy New Grand Restaurant. Who could possibly care about a minor kabuki dance program the day after Japan launched war against the United States of America and the British Empire? A newspaper account, wholly lacking in irony, noted blandly: "Most of the nationals of the countries now at war with Japan are indeed unable to attend." Even so, Yokoyama believed the event was important because "appreciation of a nation's culture is one of the foremost prerequisites of that country's being understood and trusted among other nations." And Japan certainly needed the world's "understanding" and "trust" on December 9, 1941. Yokoyama said he wanted to show kabuki to foreigners, rather than nō or *bunraku*, because it "represents all the superior features of the Japanese theatrical culture." The start of the war with America invigorated Yokoyama to promise that he would write and produce several new kabuki plays in the coming year for the benefit of foreign spectators.[87] That is, kabuki was not only a great traditional art. It was capable of representing the emerging new world as well.

Kabuki after Pearl Harbor

Was it coincidence that on December 6, 1941, Umewaka Rokurō, the nō actor most favored by the government because of his strong support of Japanese military expansion, gave an Offertory Nō (*hōnō nō*) performance in the precincts of Meiji Shrine in Tokyo? The play that Rokurō chose was *The Sword Smith,* in which the god Inari helps the renowned smith Munechika forge a perfect sword to be presented to the emperor. It is hard to escape the symbolism of such a ritual enactment two days before the living emperor declared war on the United States and England.[88]

Japan entered an entirely new and more demanding war on December 8, 1941. This was formally acknowledged in a policy statement issued by the director general of the Bureau of Information on December 12: "The current struggle against America and Britain, together with the China Incident, shall together be called the War of Greater East Asia."[89] He emphasized that the two goals of the war, to construct a New Order in East Asia and to settle the China Incident, were unchanged.[90] It is fascinating to realize that the defeat of America and Britain was not mentioned as a war aim. This is consistent with the Japanese government's continued insistence that war was forced on Japan by the Western powers and that Japan attacked America to gain dominance in Asia and not to defeat the United States. Be that as it may, on December 8

the Japanese nation embarked on a gamble in which it seemed, at first, to hold all the cards.

When Imperial General Headquarters proudly announced that Japan's Wild Eagle naval pilots had reduced Pearl Harbor to ruins and had sunk most of America's Pacific Fleet at anchorage, Japanese of all classes and persuasions were buoyed with enthusiasm and excitement. When the first news bulletins began to arrive, theater managers spontaneously halted performances. Actors and audiences at the Kabuki-za stood at attention to listen to the national anthem over loudspeakers, a reading of the imperial rescript declaring war on America and Britain, and a confident address by Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki. An ecstatic observer prophesied: "The firm unity of one hundred million citizens is forever carved indelibly into the hearts of those who were gathered in the theaters this night. And so, burning with the sincere spirit of patriotic arts, the actors resumed their performances."[91] Kabuki actor Onoe Baikō VII recalled that he and other young actors felt great excitement, and worry, when they heard the news that affected their lives so deeply:

> Early in the morning of December 8, I heard a special bulletin from Imperial Headquarters announcing the start of the Pacific War. Had the war finally begun? Feeling somewhat jittery, I went to the Kabuki-za. Backstage we young actors argued strongly over how the war would go and what would happen to theater. Over the next two or three days, Imperial Headquarters announced one piece of good news after another — the attack on Hawai'i, the naval battle off Malaya, the fighting for Singapore. All of Japan was intoxicated by the tremendous military success.[92]

In the heady months that followed, actors at the Kabuki-za plotted the course of the war on large maps posted backstage.

Ichikawa Ennosuke II and his troupe were whistle-stopping through Kyushu performing traditional kabuki plays and dances at factories and mines. A reporter traveling with them declared that everyone was greatly invigorated by the war news: "The imperial rescript against America and Britain, proclaimed on December 8, instantly intensified our world and inspired in one hundred million hearts a powerful spirit to bravely attack."[93] Troupe members gathered to discuss what they could do to help the war. "Many immediately wanted to stage a new play about the War of Greater East Asia," but in the end Ennosuke continued his traditional program.[94]

Two days later, a news flash declared that off the coast of the Malay Peninsula Japanese bombers had sunk the pride of the British Far Eastern Squadron, the battleship *Prince of Wales* and its heavy cruiser escort *Repulse* (Fig. 6.9).

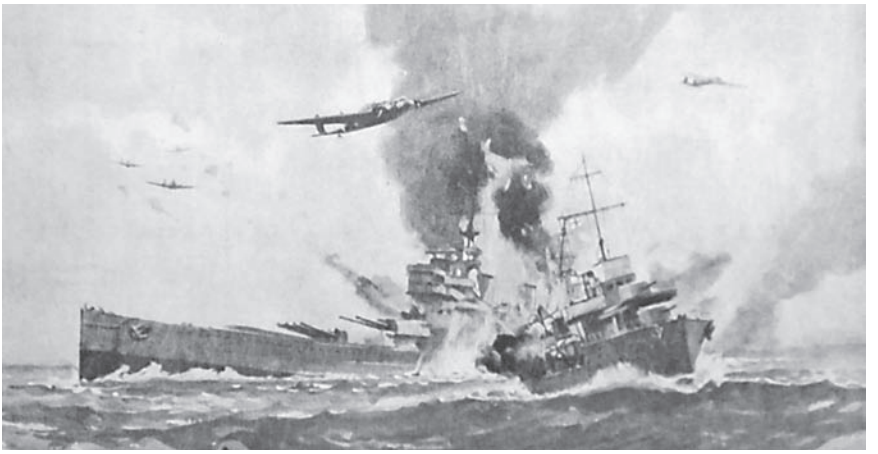


Fig. 6.9. A widely circulated picture postcard, "Sinking England's *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse*." On the third day of the Pacific War, Great Britain's "unsinkable" battleship and escort cruiser were sunk while steaming north from Singapore without air cover. (Courtesy Tanaka Yuko)

With these losses, the British were unable to block Japanese landings on the Malay coast, leading to the fall of Singapore nine weeks later.

Three days after Japan declared war on its Anglo-American enemies, the *Japan Times & Advertiser* reassuringly carried the usual full-page "Stage and Silver Screen" section in its Thursday edition.[95] Its center column was headlined: "WAR NO HINDRANCE TO KABUKI OPENING" and noted, "Despite the war declaration of Japan . . . all the seats of the theaters are filled to capacity daily."[96] Wake Island was captured in late December, and in the ensuing months, Japan's rapid conquests in Southeast Asia and the Pacific elicited celebration at a fever pitch (Fig. 6.10). People wanted to be out and about, and going to the theater fit the elevated spirit of the general public. According to the official history of the Kabuki-za, "Traditional kabuki and *bunraku* plays experienced a great surge in attendance" because their ideology supported loyalty to the nation.[97] Comic actor Furukawa Roppa wrote in his diary a few days after the Pearl Harbor attack: "I went to the Kabuki-za expecting a poor house of 60 percent; instead it was sold out and averaging 104 percent of capacity every day."[98]

Several weeks after Japan's great victories were announced, Ichimura Uzaemon, as head of the Japan Actors' Association, wrote very little about the war and much about actors' duty to their profession. He laid out a not so subtle appeal that theater should be allowed to continue without change, that entertainment was necessary for victory:

Fig. 6.10. Official propaganda painting by Matsusaka Yasu, *Landing Operations at Wake Island (Campaign II)*, shows Japanese soldiers treating American prisoners-of-war kindly in 1941 (the Japanese commander executed all prisoners on the island in 1943). Half-naked (half human?) Americans are allowed to ride in a truck, while properly dressed Japanese soldiers walk. In the painter's imagination, the American prisoners wave lightheartedly to Japanese aircraft flying overhead. (USASC Photo #FEC-47-80882. Courtesy General Douglas MacArthur Foundation)

> At last, the conflict with Britain and American is unfolding and is widening into world war. As actors, we must diligently pursue our artistic path (*geidō*) and protect the institution of entertainment that is our life's work. . . . Japan faces a do-or-die emergency of great magnitude. After long discussions, producers and actors are determined to energetically work for the benefit of the theater world. As actors, our greatest pleasure is to provide even a small measure of sustenance to people's lives. At the present time, the most flourishing theaters and opera houses in Europe are in Germany. Entering a long-term war that calls for courage and determination, entertainment becomes all the more necessary. We have no alternative but to protect with all our hearts that which we so deeply cherish.[99]

Uzaemon promised very little here: theater artists should work hard to protect themselves and their art, and this should help win the war.

When it became clear that Japan was rapidly remaking the map of Asia and the Pacific, some theater professionals began to dream of an international

future for themselves. This was true even for arts that were not, strictly speaking, Japanese. Miki Ichirō, director of the Tokyo Ballet Theater, pledged on December 20 "to create a new Japanese ballet art for the advancement of Japanese culture in the world." Having successfully staged a version of *Peer Gynt*, Miki said: "The Tokyo Ballet Theatre Company are united in the firm belief that it is our duty to . . . develop a new Japanese dancing art. We do not know how many years the War of Greater East Asia will last, but we are convinced that when the war is won and peace returns, there will be a call from the world for our Japanese contribution to the culture of mankind."[100] World acclaim might come for Japanese artists provided the country was victorious. Artists had a strong, selfish motive to support the war.

Emblematic of kabuki support for Japan's entry into the larger world war, on December 22 the Shōchiku Company invited the German and Italian ambassadors and a score of their staff to see *Kumagai's Battle Camp* and other kabuki treasures at the Kabuki-za.[101] The year before this, President Ōtani had welcomed members of the Soviet embassy to the Kabuki-za, in line with the Japanese government's policy of friendly neutrality with the Soviet Union.[102]

Within days of the attack on Pearl Harbor and Southeast Asia, officials of the cabinet Bureau of Information summoned theater, film, and music producers to advise them that "amusement enterprises under . . . wartime stresses will not be suppressed but will be carefully guided."[103] Officials ominously warned that "improvements" in the contents of all amusements must be carried out to serve the war. The bureau noted that shorter performances would assist blackouts, and Shōchiku board director Kido Shirō rose to express "our full-hearted support of the government's move."[104] (Shōchiku's two-a-day productions fit well into shorter blocks of time.)[105] In Kyoto, officials of the Propaganda Division, Imperial Rule Assistance Association, called a roundtable discussion (*kondankai*) with publicity directors of eleven theatrical organizations, who forthwith agreed to form a Kansai Film, Theater, and Entertainment Propaganda Association devoted to "the successful conclusion of the War of Greater East Asia." The head of publicity in Shōchiku's Osaka office was chosen to be the organization's first chair.[106]

The Imperial Mission

In justifying the new war, a chorus of voices in government and the media proclaimed that Japan was doing no more than Western powers had done. When American president Franklin D. Roosevelt condemned Japan for its immoral aggression in Asia, wasn't he merely saying that old colonial powers did not

want competition from a new colonial power? Or as C. Wright Mills writes of colonial morality in general: "Privileged nations condemn weaker ones in the name of internationalism, defending with moral notions what has been won by force against those have-nots whom, making their bid for ascendancy or equality later, can hope to change the *status quo* only by force."[107] When he was a young man, former prime minister Konoe Fumimaru similarly observed that the Western democracies were politically motivated when they called for peace: "A country that wants to maintain the status quo cries for peace, while a country that wants to change things threatens war."[108] A cornerstone of Japanese colonial policy was the belief that millions of new subjects of the empire longed to experience the beneficent rule enjoyed by Japanese in the homeland. Therefore, it was Japan's duty "to lead the world to a state in which it will shine under the ideal of the boundless virtue of His Majesty the Emperor."[109]

Censorship of all performing arts was tightened after December 8. What was advised against in the late 1930s was now explicitly forbidden. All the fruits of Western decadence were placed out of bounds. As Marius B. Jansen has written: "The appearance [in Japan of] Western dress, Western architecture, feminism, equality, cabarets and movies all seemed expressive of the selfishness, avarice and immorality of modern materialism. . . . Conservatives deplored all this as a departure from the true Japan."[110] Japan was building a new empire and a new Asian culture. It was undertaking a massive war in which it was wagering the survival of the nation and its culture. In the coming years there could be no place in the empire for the smallest vestige of Anglo-American decadence. Just days after December 8, Shōchiku and Tōhō jointly announced they would show no American films for the duration of the war. English was named an enemy language and cello, saxophone, trombone, strike, walk, and double play passed out of use. Movie houses like "Kinema Palace" took on respectable, native Japanese names while in official discourse East Asia (*tōa*) ousted the Anglo-centric term Far East (*kyokutō*).[111] Theater's sole task was to promote the nation's sacred mission to create one Greater East Asia.

The Future of Kabuki: December 1941

And yet theater professionals had other goals that could not be ignored. Government policy did not simply wipe them away. Ozawa Ryōzō's summary of the theater situation at the end of 1941 reminds us that kabuki was in a delicate position at that time. The government wanted plays with appropriate wartime themes; kabuki buffs wanted kabuki to shine as a refined art. And in everything it was necessary to follow, or pretend to follow, government guidance:

Fig. 6.11. Even the elegant dance classic *The Subscription List* lost its luster after one thousand wartime performances. This feudal chestnut was produced forty-three times, nearly three times a year, between 1931 and 1945. To protect his master Minamoto Yoshitsune, mountain priest Benkei (Matsumoto Kōshirō VIII, left) and his followers face down a suspicious barrier guard, Togashi Zaemon (Ichikawa Danjūrō XI, right). (Courtesy Shōchiku)

As for plays, although the establishment of Citizens' Drama was much talked about, nothing was practically accomplished to restore vigor to playwriting. . . . The Bureau of Information and the Kabuki Investigation Committee together were expected to select the best plays of 1941. The bureau recommended *The Cultivator* by Akizuki Keita,[112] while the committee recommended Suga Kanjirō's *Beyond Obligation and Revenge*. As might be expected, *The Cultivator*, which was named a Citizens' Drama, was said to be brilliant, standing head and shoulders above the other. As a result, the elderly members of the Kabuki Investigation Committee — Ihara Toshirō, Oka Onitarō, and Kawajiri Seitarō — retreated to classic kabuki, giving their support to the high art of the capital city. The committee seized the chance offered by the bountiful 2,600th-year celebrations to crystallize emotional support for kabuki classics, and that tendency is promoted today. The truth is commercial theater strikes a pose of genuinely adapting to the New Order Movement, but at heart manage-

> ment must follow a policy of earning profit, playwrights are spineless, and even though people revel in the prosperity brought by the war, play selection is arbitrary.[113]

Ozawa finds fault with all types of kabuki plays: war plays "are boring, especially when National Spirit (*kokumin seishin*) dialogue is dropped in out of the blue," kabuki classics "are simply said to be appropriate to the times and then peddled with a self-satisfied air," and sickeningly sweet new dramas are staged "using the feigned rationale that the imminent darkness of war necessitates plays of pure entertainment." All of this, Ozawa finds, "ignores the New Order Movement and is quite disconnected from the critical war situation." Ozawa pessimistically concludes, "The Grand Kabuki dramas embraced at the Kabuki-za — *The Subscription List*, *The Village School*, and *Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees* — are the same every year. They are listless and have no energy"[114] (Fig. 6.11).

CHAPTER SEVEN

Japan and Kabuki at the Zenith | 1942

Destroy the enemy of the Land of the Sun Goddess.
—*Loyal Souls of the War Dead*, kabuki play, 1942

Singapore has fallen! . . . Let us give thanks to His Majesty!
—*Japan Times & Advertiser*, 1942

Monday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Friday.
—Work slogan, 1942

In early 1942 Japan was poised to become the master of Asia. Seemingly without pause the Imperial Army and Imperial Navy were moving from victory to astonishing victory. The Pearl Harbor bombing was said to have obliterated America's Pacific navy (Fig. 7.1). Within days Hong Kong fell. Britain's "impregnable" fortress of Singapore, protected by 90,000 British and Commonwealth troops, was captured in nine weeks. Daring Japanese military strategy and enthusiastic soldiering forced the humiliating surrender of a British army larger and better equipped than the attackers. *Engei gahō* headlined its March issue "Commemorate the Fall of Singapore!"[1] The *Japan Times & Advertiser* devoted its front page to a single article, "The Historic Victory of Singapore," that summarized the noble purposes of the expanded war:

> Singapore has fallen! . . . Let us give thanks to His Majesty, our Emperor, under whose benign rule this blessing has come to pass; let us give praises to the gallant men of our incomparable Army and Navy whose heroism has brought us this glory; let us give honor to the noble dead who have sacrificed their all that East Asia might be free! . . . The four centuries of Anglo-Dutch-American exploitation of this part of the world has ended. At last the inhabitants of this entire area will be able to work as free men to build a happier and more prosperous Greater East Asia of their own. So let joy be unrestrained! . . . We have altered the face of the earth. Let us give thanks and rejoice![2]

Immediately after Singapore was surrendered on February 15, the conquering Japanese army committed another great civilian massacre of Chinese civilians. Following specific orders from Lt. General Yamashita Tomoyuki's 25th Army headquarters, Military Police (Kenpeitai) executed between 6,000 and 50,000 Chinese residents said to be anti-Japanese but in fact chosen virtually at random in an official "Purge of Overseas Chinese." The executions spread to Malaya, where Military Police officers instructed men under their command: "You are about to kill these people by order of the highest general, the Emperor." [3] As with the rape of Nanking, home front audiences knew nothing about the atrocities that followed the Singapore victory. To the contrary, popular theater troupes in Asakusa and Dotonbori staged congratulatory overnight pickle plays about the army's heroic capture of Malaya and Singapore. Audiences were overjoyed to see Japan's military successes dramatized on stage.

Java, Sumatra, and Burma, too, were easily taken, and on May 6, 1942, the last Filipino and American defenders of Corrigador Island in Manila Bay surrendered. Within six months a vast new Japanese Empire stretched from Wake Island in the central Pacific to the Andaman Islands west of Burma, and from the steamy jungles of New Guinea in the south to Alaska's Sitka Island in the frigid north. Four weeks after Pearl Harbor, an editorialist wrote mockingly that Japan had embarked on its conquests in order to "make the world safe from democracy."[4] An *Asahi* headline, March 9, bragged: "The Pacific Is Japan's Ocean." Some Japanese strategists imagined further conquests: Australia, India, Hawai'i, and even the continental United States (Fig. 7.2).[5]

Shortly after war "suddenly burst out" against America, Britain, and the Netherlands, theater critic Miyake Shūtarō shared his feelings with Shōchiku president Ōtani Takejirō. I think Miyake's remarks are typical of people working in kabuki in 1942: "The nation's situation completely changed after the War of Greater East Asia suddenly burst out scarcely a month ago. Indeed, nothing could possibly be more gratifying to Japanese subjects than these great battle victories. And so, feeling brightness and hope, though not knowing the future, it seems to me the war will surely be good for the theater world." Miyake was thrilled and honored by Japan's military success. More to the point, war was going to be good business for theater.

Ōtani replied to Miyake in yet grander terms, linking theatrical success to Japan's stunning war victories:

> Yes. We must be eternally grateful. It happens that on December 8 I was attending a Central Cooperation Conference meeting. There I heard the bulletin that at last the war had begun. And then within two or three

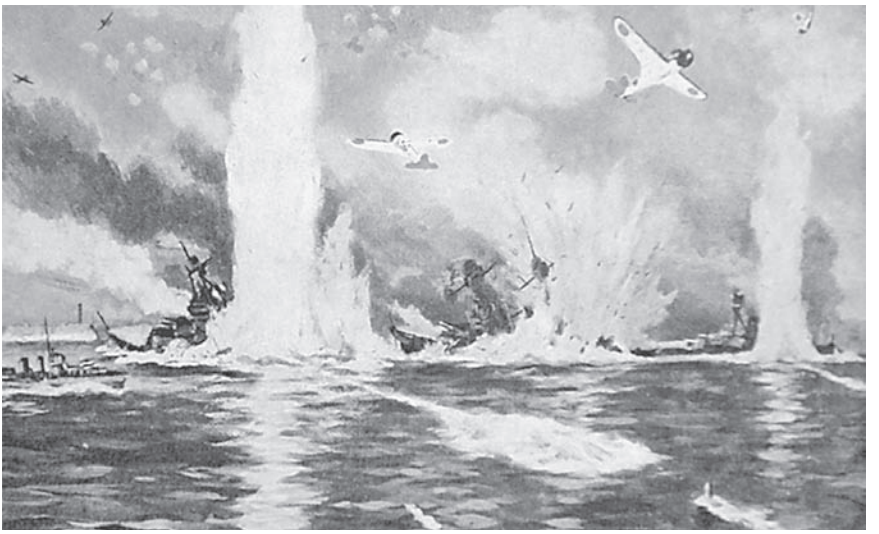


Fig. 7.1. Propaganda painting *Special Attack Force Imbued with Eternal Unswerving Loyalty Assaults Pearl Harbor*, by Matsuzoe Ken, was widely circulated on picture postcards. In the initial minutes of the attack, torpedoes from midget submarines (imagined) and aerial bombs (real) sink two American battleships and strike a third. (Courtesy Tanaka Yuko)

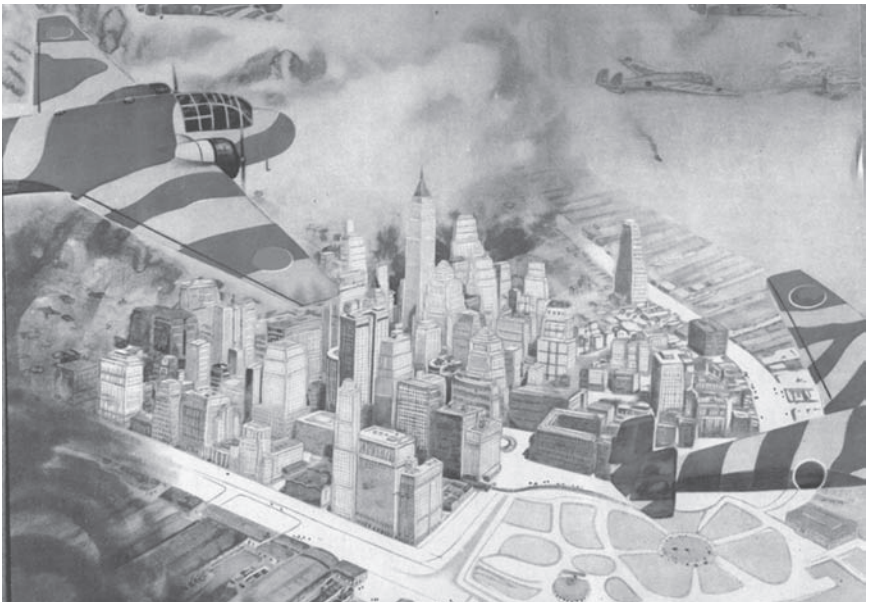


Fig. 7.2. Euphoria over the Pearl Harbor victory gave rise to the fantasy that Japan could easily bomb New York City into submission. In a propaganda painting, *The Domination of New York*, artist Kojō Kokan has imagined heroic Wild Eagle pilots destroying Manhattan on "the last day of America's false material civilization." (*Catalogue of Japanese War Art Paintings,* GHQ, US Army Forces, Pacific [1947]. Courtesy General Douglas MacArthur Foundation)

> days, our great sea victories absolutely changed the world.[6] I was truly happy. This magnificent success in battle is the result of the navy's secret training over twenty years. For theater, too, our success is achieved by piling rehearsal upon rehearsal. . . . In early December, audiences dropped off. But from the middle of the month, audiences picked up again. Fortunately, advance tickets for the January production are going like hot cakes. Next month the situation at the Kabuki-za looks very good.[7]

Japan's Exceptionalist Mission

The official reasons that Japan's government gave for its incursions into China and the Pacific — overpopulation at home, Japan's superior civilization, future benefits for the colonized — were hardly different from justifications endlessly offered by Europeans and Americans for their imperialist adventures. With the change of one word, the following apologia for French colonization, written in 1891, could apply to Japan in 1942:

> It is neither natural nor just that the civilized people of the West [Japan] should be indefinitely crowded together and stifled in the restricted spaces that were their first homes, that they should accumulate there the wonders of science, art, and civilization . . . and that they should leave perhaps half the world to small groups of ignorant men, who are powerless, who are truly retarded children dispersed over boundless territories, or else to decrepit populations without energy and without direction, truly old men incapable of any effort, of any organized and far-seeing action.[8]

Westerners had long described their colonial schemes in idealistic terms and their colonial subjects as uncivilized, ill-educated, and childlike. Now Japanese officials said their nation, too, was embarked on a noble, civilizing mission in Asia and the Pacific.[9] It was expected that Japanese performing arts — theater, music, and dance — as well as literature and the fine arts would make an essential contribution to Japan's civilizing task.

Homegrown scholars and polemicists conjured up philosophic and pseudoscientific justifications for Japan's military expansion. One theory that gained particular prominence was "exceptionalism," the belief that Japan was a unique nation destined to carry out a special civilizing mission in the world.[10] The Japanese people were superior to other races because their land alone was created by native goddesses and gods (*kami*). Further, the Japanese nation stood invincible in war through divine protection of the *kami*. In other words, the exceptionalist position was largely a restatement of basic *kokugaku* ideology:

"Japan was the centre of the universe; the Emperor was the Emperor of the whole world; and all Japanese were superior beings."[11] Colonel Tsuji Masanobu, designer of the army's Southern Advance strategy, wrote in a training pamphlet that Japanese soldiers "should keep [native] movements under constant supervision" for natives were "prey to the slightest rumor and incapable of independent thought."[12] The idea that Japan deserved to rule southern nations, first proposed a century before, was becoming reality.[13]

In an article, "Japan, the World's Center," published in 1942, professor Komaki Saneshige, founder of the ultranationalist Kyoto School of Geopolitics and a professor at Kyoto Imperial University, discounted Sumeria and Babylon as the cradle of world civilizations. He made the extraordinary claim that the Japanese islands constituted the world's "oldest civilization out of which other civilizations have branched." Using a philological analysis, he noted that the word "Sumera" appeared in ancient Japanese, as in Sumera Mikoto (Emperor God) and Sumera Mikuni (Imperial Land). This, Komaki asserted, was proof that Japan, not the Near East, "provided the world with its first civilization."[14]

Professor Uchimura Kanzō offered a different rationale for placing Japan at the apex of world civilizations. He argued that while the Armenia/Persia region was the earliest site of human culture, two currents of civilization had flowed outward from there, one to backward, static China and one to aggressive, crude America. These two streams met and fused only in Japan, creating the bountiful spiritual energy of the Japanese people (*Nihon seishin*) that "shall overflow the earth."[15] Japan was destined to form a Pan-Asian group of nations that would throw off white imperialism. This theory allowed nationalists to play both sides of the game: Japan was equal to Western nations in technology, yet it also shared spiritual qualities with other Asians. Key to all such theories was the nativist belief that Japan was destined to bring all nations under the emperor's harmonious sway, either by persuasion or force. "The Japanese Emperor, being born of the gods, is unique and is the Emperor of the whole world. Just as there is only one sun in the sky, there can be only one Emperor in the world."[16] Other writings countered Western misunderstandings of such central Japanese ideals as *Yamato damashii*: far from being aggressive or cruel, "this martial spirit is that which tries to give life to all things and is not that which destroys."[17]

Theater as Cultural Propaganda

Japan's civilizing mission presented tremendous opportunities for Japanese arts and literature to act on a vast international stage. Japanese military gov-

ernors followed predetermined occupation guidelines and quickly established propaganda corps in the new imperial territories under their command with sections devoted to education, press, radio, and visual and performing arts. To staff these propaganda units in Burma, Thailand, Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong, the Philippines, and Indonesia, the military recruited a thousand Japanese "culture warriors" (*bunka senjin*). Many were, or would become, well-known cultural figures: Hino Ashihei, author of *Earth and Soldiers* and *Barley and Soldiers*; conservative critic-essayist Kon Hidemi; Ibuse Masuji, who after the war wrote *Black Rain* about the atom bombing of Hiroshima; lecturer in French literature Nakajima Kenzō; epic novelist Kaionji Chōgorō; and others. Under their supervision, local artists created vernacular-language stage productions, children's paper-picture plays, songs, and films.[18] Early propaganda themes were positive and generally benign: "Asia Is One," "Japan: Light of Asia," "Promote Increased Food Production." Later themes promoted the war: "Security from Spies" and "Promote Fighting Spirit of Japan." The two basic aims of propaganda in the new empire were straightforward: to encourage local people to accept Japan's leadership and to marshal support for specific war policies of the military administration. Theatrical entertainment was thought to be an especially effective propaganda medium because it could sugarcoat government messages. Culture warriors also contributed to the goals of military censorship, discouraging artistic expression that might challenge the imperial mission.

Propaganda Corps officials tailored programs to perceived local needs. In Malaya and Singapore "Nipponization" was stressed through Japanese language training and spiritual purification, while establishing a Japan Cultural Institute in Bangkok was a priority in Thailand. In Indonesia, the Propaganda Corps formed the Java Theatrical Association to produce appropriately themed *ketoprak* folk plays, *wayang* puppet dramas, and modern plays. In rural Java, local actors trained to narrate propaganda paper-picture plays traveled a circuit by bicycle (Fig. 7.3), while in Jakarta's Municipal Theater *Storm over Asia* trumpeted Japan's war aims.[19]

Kon Hidemi, placed in charge of performing arts in the Philippines, had been a member of the leftist Heart Troupe along with progressive kabuki actor Kawarazaki Chōjūrō IV. Following the war Kon organized the Japan Arts Festival that helped rejuvenate kabuki, and in 1968 he became the first director of the Japan Foundation. In Manila in 1942 he organized the International Revue Company of vaudeville artists who performed regularly at the Metropolitan Theater. In the typical finale, the full cast waved Japanese flags and sang Japan's "Patriotic March." In July 1942, Kon's culture warriors successfully in-

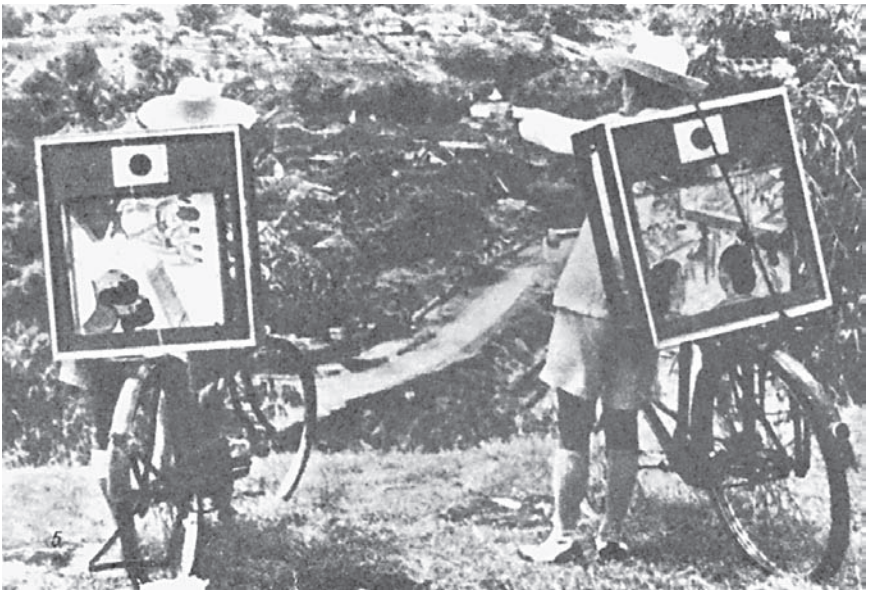


Fig. 7.3. Two local employees of the Japanese Propaganda Corps carry *kamishibai* picture play cards on their bicycles deep into the Javanese countryside, 1942 or 1943. (From Fujiwara Akira, *Zusetsu Shōwa no rekishi, Taiheiyō sensō*, 7)

veigled the Fong Wong Chinese opera troupe to perform in celebration of the fifth anniversary of Japan's invasion of China.[20] Under Japanese guidance, live Philippine theater, mostly musicals, flourished while, bending to local conditions, American films were allowed well into 1944. Apparently *The Phantom Empire* with Gene Autry, *Skull and Crown* starring the dog Rin Tin Tin Jr., *The King of the Jungle* with Buster Crabbe, and *The Great Victor Herbert* were considered harmless.[21] Filipinos were allowed to stage English-language dramas as late as February 1945, and censors allowed a letter to the editor to ask for more English: "As the public clamor is for better stage shows, may I suggest . . . the gradual use of English lines?[22]

A kind of gold rush mentality took hold among intellectuals inspired by the fortuitous opportunities that Japan's easy victories presented. In areas where Chinese was spoken, linguists urged that Japanese language should be taught in academic centers that they would manage.[23] Sociologists proposed that they undertake wide-ranging studies of "native" societies to assist military governance. Scholars and journalists traveling through the occupied territories sent home reports of exotic theater genres. In *Engekikai*, Terasaki Hiroshi happily described plays in Java "that strenuously oppose the Dutch government" and in Malaya "that fight against British tyranny." It should be relatively easy, ac-

cording to Terasaki, to insert Japanese music into local opera forms and to create local-language *shingeki* plays about the current situation. But most of all, southern theater needs Japanese guidance. Because Chinese puppet plays, Malay opera, and Javanese shadow dramas are racially based, "we must devote concerted effort over a long period of time to make these old theater forms new."[24] One armchair critic, with no experience in the south, was quite certain he knew what should be done to "construct theater" in the southern region: "Japanese revues and young women's musical plays will be easy for these people to appreciate," and as for kabuki, "we'll have to send troupes out willy-nilly and see what happens."[25]

Japanese occupation of the southern territories stimulated serious scholarship as well. Officials of the Japan League of Touring Theaters proposed to translate and produce great Indian, Thai, and Burmese plays for Japanese audiences, "in line with the aims of the Greater East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere."[26] Ozawa Yoshikuni published an inclusive survey of Chinese shadow and doll puppets, Javanese *wayang*, and Indian, Thai, and Cambodian puppetry in 1943. Ozawa was writing as a member of the Puppet Theater Study Center of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, and inevitably his scholarship was framed within the ideology of wartime imperial Japan:

> The modern history of Asia is almost entirely a history of aggression. Especially in East Asia the arrogant actions of the Anglo-Saxon race have sacrificed innocent races and rendered them without hope. . . . We know that the War of Greater East Asia, bursting out on December 8, 1941, was the hammer blow that destroyed and drove out tyranny, thereby releasing from their shackles one billion innocent peoples of East Asia.[27]

According to Ozawa, it was the duty of Japan's "One Hundred Million with One Heart" to help the newly freed masses of East Asia develop their culture and theater arts.[28]

Theater polemicists were quick to claim that performing arts possessed a unique ability to bring people of different races together (Fig. 7.4). According to Waseda University theater professor Kawatake Shigetoshi, "Southerners . . . have a natural, genuine racial affinity toward us and aptitude for things Japanese." In a long article published in May 1942, he advanced the view that, "while most of the natives are rather low in their cultural attainments, they are fairly advanced and appreciative of good features" in music, dance, and theater. Japanese should show sympathetic attention to Asian performing arts in order to "assure a lasting peace" by "winning over the people's hearts." "The propitious development of the war," Kawatake asserted, "presents this

golden opportunity" in which "music and dance will be the best means to bring peoples of different cultures closer together."[29] To this end, he proposed a Greater East Asia Fine Arts Research Institute to be managed by Japanese theater scholars and artists like himself. But well-funded Propaganda Corps programs in the southern regions were already in operation, and Kawatake's proposal was ignored. Units of the Propaganda Corps were extremely active in six conquered territories for about three years, a relatively short period. When the war ended, their cultural work simply evaporated. As David K. Goodman tells us, except for several hundred Special Southern Region students who benefited from study in Japan, "practically no vestiges of Japan's wartime cultural program remain in Southeast Asia today."[30]

Kabuki in Asia

The several hundred million indigenous subjects of the new empire were the target audience of the Propaganda Corps. There was still another important audience for live performing arts in the newly occupied areas. By mid-1942, some two million Japanese military personnel, occupation officials, advisers, settlers, farmers, businessmen, manufacturers, students, carpetbaggers, and adventurers were living and working in the far reaches of the empire. This Japanese audience was far from home and eager to be entertained by familiar songs, dances, and plays. In 1938, approximately one thousand Japanese geisha (*geiki*) were living and working in the larger cites of Manchuria and occupied areas of China. Following the start of the War of Greater East Asia, double or triple that number moved into far-flung parts of the empire. Here the services of Japanese women entertainers, singing and dancing to *shamisen* music, were highly prized.[31] Other entertainers followed. Most geisha and their *shamisen* accompanists settled in for the long haul, much as Japanese farmers and retail merchants had done a decade earlier in Manchuria. By 1940, professional nō teacher-performers were living in Shanghai and larger cities in Manchuria. They taught nō singing and dancing to Japanese officers and expatriate civilians, and they supervised monthly amateur recitals of full nō plays and song and dance excerpts.[32]

The case was completely different for performers of commercial theater genres, kabuki, *shinpa, shinkokugeki*, young women's opera, women's sword drama, and vaudeville. It was prohibitively expensive to relocate a troupe of twenty, thirty, or more members thousands of miles into a foreign environment. And it would be risky for an actor or singer to abandon his or her established audience at home. The solution adopted by scores of commercial

Fig. 7.4. The front cover of the Japanese-language magazine *Rekishi shashin* (History in Photographs), published by the Propaganda Corps in Indonesia, shows local dancers entertaining a touristlike group of neatly dressed Japanese troops. (From Fujiwara Akira, *Zusetsu Shōwa no rekishi, Taiheiyō sensō*, 7)

theater, dance, and musical troupes was to tour overseas for a few weeks under military auspices and then return home.

On at least fifteen occasions, government agencies assisted professional kabuki troupes, some as large as eighty members, to tour the Asian mainland. As early as 1924, Ichikawa Sadanji II's kabuki troupe, with Ichikawa Ennosuke II and Ichikawa Jukai III in supporting roles, had given consolation performances for Japanese expatriates living in Port Arthur, Harbin (Ha'erbin), and Dairen (Dalian) in Manchuria. Sadanji was impelled to travel because most of Tokyo's theaters lay in ruins following the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923. Sadanji had a cordial meeting with world-famous Chinese opera star Mei Lanfang (Mei Lanfang); it was the second time the two actors had met.[33] In 1938, Nakamura Kichiemon I received red-carpet treatment when his troupe offered consolation performances for Japanese soldiers stationed in Dairen, Mukden, and the New Capital of Manchuria, Changchun, as well as in Seoul and Pyongyang, Korea (Fig. 7.5).[34]

Nakamura Ganjirō II and his kabuki troupe from Kansai toured Manchuria in 1938 and Korea and Taiwan in 1939.[35] Also in 1939, a kabuki troupe headed

Fig. 7.5. Kabuki actor Nakamura Kichiemon I (right), September 1938, at the Manchurian Railway Club in Changchun (Xinjing), the New Capital of Manchuria, reads a proclamation of welcome from the Japanese Kwantung Army. His brother, Nakamura Tokizō III (left), an *onnagata* actor, is seated next to Colonel Kobayashi of the Kwantung Army. (From *Engei gahō*, November 1938)

by Ichikawa Ennosuke II and his brothers, Danshirō and Chusha, performed at military bases throughout northern China.[36] And in 1941, the Shōchiku Citizens' Drama Touring Troupe composed of kabuki actors and actresses performed for the first time for soldiers on the front lines. The Shōchiku troupe divided into two groups to better cover ten districts in China.[37]

The peak year for travel in the empire was 1942. During the summer and fall, Kikugorō VI and Ennosuke II each led troupes on extensive tours of Manchuria. Shōchiku president Ōtani Takejirō headed the eighty-person Kikugorō touring group, whose members the Bureau of Information designated "Artistic Envoys to the Tenth Anniversary of the Founding of Manchuria."[38] Kikugorō and President Ōtani began their Manchurian expedition with formal, patriotic speeches on June 6, the day Japan's Imperial Navy lost the Battle of Midway (Fig. 7.6). Because this defeat was never publicly revealed, the celebrants in Manchuria were unaware that the festive events of the day also marked the beginning of the end of the new Japanese empire.[39] In the autumn, Kikugorō returned to China to deepen ties with local theater artists. He visited the renowned Rong Chun Chinese Opera School and consulted with the well-

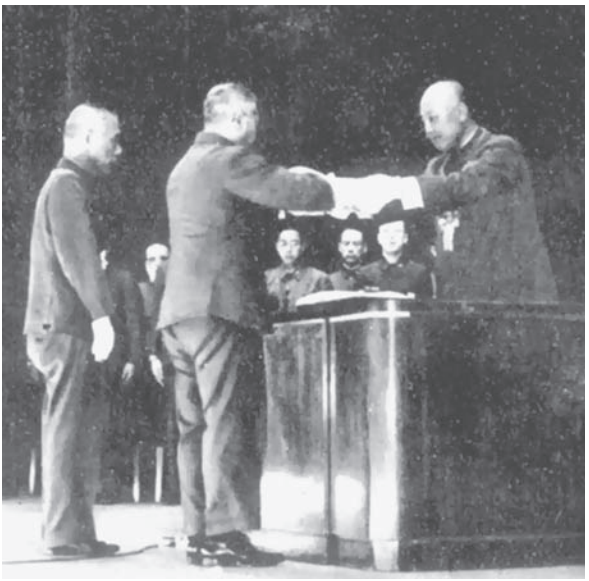


Fig. 7.6. In 1942, actor Onoe Kikugorō VI and Shōchiku president Ōtani Takejirō led an eighty-member kabuki troupe to the mainland to celebrate the "Tenth Anniversary of the Founding of Manchuria." On June 6, Kikugorō is presented with a proclamation of welcome to the Manchurian capital of Changchun (Xinjing). (From *Engei gahō*, July 1942)

known actor of male roles Ma Lianliang. In June 1942, Sawamura Sōjūrō led a troupe to Korea, where they performed for Japanese soldiers and sailors.[40] Finally, eager younger professional actors who had recently formed the Kabuki Club in Tokyo petitioned the League of Performing Arts and Culture and the Army Ministry to send them on "an extended tour of the South Seas regions in the East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere to entertain Japanese soldiers stationed . . . there."[41] Meanwhile, in Manila Japanese soldiers on furlough were entertained by kabuki dances sponsored by the local Japanese Women's Association.[42]

Even with the assistance of the military, touring to a foreign country was no easy matter for kabuki troupes (Fig. 7.7). Ozawa Ryōzō gives intimate glimpses of Ennosuke's 1939 tour to the continent. For a number of reasons, Ozawa believes the tour "cannot be termed successful." To begin with, the company of sixty was large and unwieldy (twenty actors, eight actors' valets, fourteen Nagauta musicians and singers, six costume and property men, three carpenters, two stage managers, two dramaturges, and five administrative staff). Travel arrangements were complex because the troupe moved rapidly from one city to the next in Manchuria and north China, and the decision to tour was made just one month before departure. When the troupe left Tokyo on March 23, important negotiations with military contacts in China were incomplete. Finally, the tour was managed by the Fuji Entertainment Company, a commercial organization. Was this a commercial profit-making tour? Or was it a consolation tour for military audiences? Fuji certainly intended to

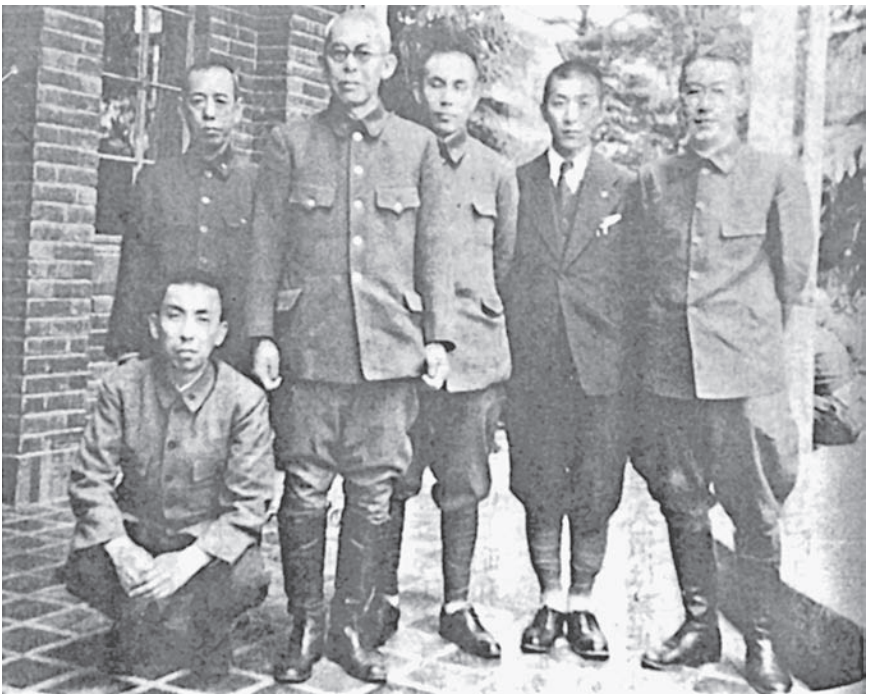


Fig. 7.7. Kabuki actors wearing "national uniforms" of tunic, breeches, and leggings or high boots, on tour to Manchuria and China in 1942: (right to left) Nakamura Tomijūrō V, Nakamura Utaemon VI (wearing conventional tie and jacket), Matsumoto Kōshirō VIII, Nakamura Kichiemon I, Nakamura Kichinojō, and Nakamura Kanzaburō XVII (kneeling). (From Nakamura Utaemon and Yamakawa Shizuo, *Utaemon no rokujūnen*)

earn a profit, and its advertising played both sides of the fence: free daytime performances would be given for the troops, and tickets would be sold at commercial theaters for evening performances. The entangling of kabuki's commercial impulses with patriotism and altruism made for a messy situation, according to Ozawa.[43]

Throughout 1942, performing artists of every kind eagerly joined the foreign tour circuit. The best of tours were arduous. The three-month journey of a Takarazuka Young Women's Opera Troupe through north China, Manchuria, and Korea was longer than most but otherwise typical. A group of thirty-four female singer-dancers, four male performers, and seventeen supporting staff followed an exhausting schedule. They gave two or three shows a day for distinguished civilian officials and military brass in big city theaters, for wounded soldiers in hospitals, and for garrisons on army bases. They traveled by ship and train (before easy air travel), and then, split into smaller groups,

they went by bus and truck into the countryside. Photos show neatly dressed young women, popularly called "Zuka girls" (*zuka gāru*),[44] threading their way along dikes between paddy fields to reach isolated army units. They gave 157 performances at forty locations around Shanghai and Nanking, dancing, singing, and smiling, always smiling, as they performed on rough platforms or on bare ground.[45] Their programs featured dances and skits set in exotic Asian lands, with Japanese heroes and heroines freely roaming across China, Thailand, Samoa, and India.[46]

The circumstance under which nō actors traveled overseas was quite different. Important homeland actors might travel to Shanghai or Dairen to give lessons to amateurs enrolled there. Or, they might be invited to perform *Okina*, *Takasago,* or other felicitous plays at the dedication of a new Shinto shrine somewhere in the empire.[47] A conquered foreign territory (*gaichi*) became part of the Japanese homeland (*naichi*) only when a Shinto deity was installed in the new land. Therefore, ritual nō performances moved farther and farther into the distant reaches of the Japanese Empire.[48] The chief priest of Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, Takahara Shosaku, traveled to newly built shrines in Hong Kong, Canton, Saigon, Hainan Island, Shonan (Singapore), Java, Timor, Ambon, Celebes, Manila, Korror, and other Pacific islands in 1943. As he wrote at the time: "The men of the Japanese Forces are warriors of Heaven. . . . Wherever the Imperial Forces advance, shrines are certain to be erected.[49] As Mark B. Peattie has written, the overseas shrines "symbolize the power and authority of the Japanese nation."[50] The traffic in nō actors stopped only in the final months of the war when American planes and ships completely cut Japan's air and sea routes.

The 225-member symphony orchestra and chorus of the Tokyo Academy of Music toured cities in Manchuria in 1942 "for the benefit of Japanese soldiers vigilantly guarding the northern frontiers." At the same time, internationally acclaimed Korean dancer Ch'oe Sŭng-hŭi spent six months traveling through north China, Manchuria, and Korea with her troupe, "giving no less than 130 performances before [Japanese] soldiers on the front lines as well as the public in general." She became a close friend of Mei Lan-fang and studied Chinese opera movement and dance. On her return to Tokyo, at a press conference she asked Japanese authorities to bring "actors and actresses in Chinese theatrical circles" to Japan, since the many famous artists "she met in the Chinese Capital were all earnestly desirous of appearing in Tokyo."[51]

Even a newly written children's picture play, *The Significance of the Sacred War*, was hand-carried to the People's Republic of Mongolia by Japanese cultural emissaries. Lamas who had studied in Japan were instructed to show the

Fig. 7.8. A female singer fronts a popular band in an outdoor consolation (*ian*) performance at an unidentified army base in Indochina, 1942 or 1943. The banner reads, "Welcome Soldiers' Relief Squad." (From Fujiwara Akira, *Zusetsu Shōwa no rekishi, Taiheiyō sensō*, 7)

play to "Mongolian juveniles at temple festivals."[52] The Yoshimoto Theatrical Corporation sent dozens of "We Want to Make You Laugh" troupes on tours to China and Manchuria. The comic routines delivered by top *rakugo* and *manzai* artists were immensely popular with troops.[53] Kushner calls attention to the benefits that comedians accrued by going overseas. Touring boosted their popularity with patriotic audiences at home and provided fresh material to be turned into new performances that lent further support for the war.[54] Some comedians published accounts of their travels on behalf of the military, reaching an even larger audience at home.[55]

In this euphoric time, hundreds of modern drama, musical, dance, and vaudeville troupes of all genres flowed out from the center into every corner of the empire, to New Guinea and Truk, to Surabaya, Mandalay, and Penang, and to remote Pacific atolls as well as to continental East Asia.[56] Most brought the troops pure entertainment, music, and laughs (Fig. 7.8). Perhaps the closest parallel in American experience is the career of stage-film-radio comedian Bob Hope. For decades Hope generously led variety troupes that entertained American servicemen wherever they were stationed throughout the world. In turn, the overseas tours generated for Hope reams of favorable domestic publicity.

It is interesting to note that a theater troupe was said to be on a domestic

(*kokunai*) tour when performing anywhere in the Japanese Empire. For example, *Records of Foreign Tours of Kabuki,* edited and published by the Shōchiku Corporation in 1992, does not include the kabuki tours in China and Manchuria in the 1930s and 1940s that I have mentioned. According to *Records,* the first time kabuki actors went to Asia on an overseas (*kaigai*) or foreign (*kokugai*) tour was ten years after the war. In 1955, Ichikawa Ennosuke II and his troupe visited the Peoples' Republic of China and performed kabuki in Shanghai and other cities as part of Japan's postwar diplomacy of reconciliation with its Asian neighbors.[57] Why have Japanese ignored the many wartime touring performances that I have mentioned here? Is it because performances were not for "foreign" audiences but for Japanese who happened to be overseas? To some extent this is true. But an article published in January 1933 noted that the army intended to dispatch Matsumoto Kōshirō VII and other entertainers to the continent in order "to impart to the thirty million people of Manchukuo knowledge of the necessity of a higher standard of living and to supply newer forms of amusement." It was useful to bring Japanese arts to Manchurian audiences because "real harmony between the two nations depends upon mutual goodwill and interest."[58] Fifteen overseas tours by kabuki troupes during the war have been effectively erased from history.

War Plays in Kabuki: 1942

Producers and playwrights brought some twenty new plays to kabuki stages during 1942, stimulated by public excitement over the nation's stunning military successes. A Kabuki-za printed program bears the sketch of a cannon muzzle and Old Glory and the Union Jack blasted to pieces along with the text "Advance — One Hundred Million Fire Balls! Slaughter — America and Britain the Enemy!"[59] Seven premieres were staged at the Kabuki-za in Tokyo, all of them new-history plays that drew parallels between Japan's glorious past and the ebullient present.[60] Uno Nobuo's *Spring Frost*, a Bureau of Information Citizens' Drama contest winner, was staged by Ichimura Uzaemon's troupe in February. Citizens' Drama expert Ōyama Isao noted that although Uno didn't "show common peoples' heroism, reflect the current times, or depict life under the New Order," at least he had written a real history play. Then Ōyama riffed on his unhappiness with current playwriting: if playwrights "are lacking in a new spirit of *bushidō*," Citizens' Drama will not appear no matter how loudly they cry out for it.[61] The Greater Japan Association Honoring Souls of the War Dead sponsored *Regent Tokimune* on the Kabuki-za's September program. Playwright Takahama Kyoko borrowed the two-part structure of

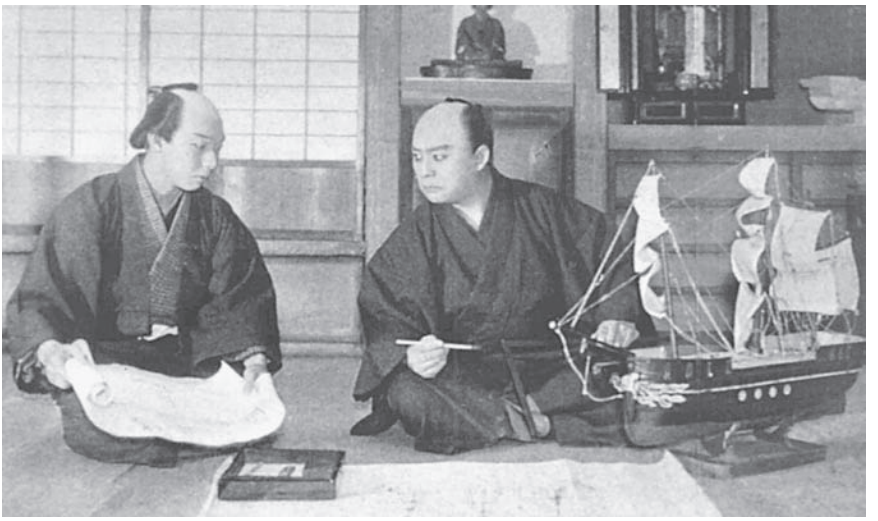


Fig. 7.9. *The First Western Ship*, Kabuki-za, 1942. Master shipbuilder Tsuzuki Toyoji (Onoe Kikugorō VI, right) is determined to design and build the first Western-style sailing vessel in Japan. Following his own plans, he shows a finished model of the ship to his second son, Unokichi (Onoe Baikō VII). (From *Engei gahō*, April 1942)

nō to recount the defeat in 1281 of the invading Mongols. In the play's second half, the spirit of Regent Hōjō Tokimune describes in dance and song a Divine Wind (kamikaze) scattering the Mongol fleet.[62] One pleased critic noted: "This is a drama that enhances the national polity (*kokutai*) and demonstrates Sacred Japan's power to confront a foreign invasion."[63] A second new play on the September bill was advertised as a "Play Selection Recommended by the Kabuki Investigation Committee." Tanaka Seiji's *Embassy to Korea* told an uplifting tale of Japanese monks and scholars, dispatched to the Korean kingdom of Shiragi, returning home to introduce Buddhism to Japan.

Two other Kabuki-za premieres earned the lavish praise of government officials for positively supporting war morale, *The First Western Ship*, set in the pre-Meiji period, which starred Kikugorō VI, and the mythologically based *Loyal Souls of the War Dead*. Shōchiku's Kabuki Investigation Committee named *The First Western Ship* best out of 796 entries in the committee's second annual kabuki playwriting contest. They awarded the play the grand prize of ¥5,000 and an all-star production at the Kabuki-za in July. The author was Hirata Kōichi, who two years before had written about Japan's first steamship in a kind of sequel to *The First Western Ship.* Hirata was an assistant playwright to Matsui Shōō and a Kabuki-za employee. Apparently it did not hurt to be well connected.

Kikugorō had just returned from a three-week tour of Manchuria when he took on the role of Tsuzuki Toyoji, the traditional shipwright who is the play's main character (Fig. 7.9). The shipwright, who had been abused for drunkenness and irresponsibility, pulls himself together when he is given the awesome responsibility of building a Western-style ship. Tsuzuki refuses help from experts. In the face of his friends' derision and foreign hostility, he relies solely on his native Japanese spirit. He demonstrates that Japan can equal Western technology when he raises the Japanese flag on his ship's main mast (Fig. 7.10).[64]

Yoshida Genjirō based *Loyal Souls of the War Dead* on the nō play of the same title. It was considered an extremely important play by government officials, named a Bureau of Information Citizens' Drama Participating Play Selection, and given separate, spectacular productions in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto. At the Kabuki-za in Tokyo, Matsumoto Kōshirō VII wore "the gorgeous ancient armor" of a samurai Guardian Sprit of the Land in part one (Fig. 7.11).[65] He returned in part two as an awe-inspiring vision, rising out of the earth through mist and fog via an elevator in the *hanamichi.*

CHORUS: Just then, in a raging blizzard of snow, the Spirit of Loyal Souls, rushing over the distant white caps, reaches the shore. With thundering words and glittering sword, he wrecks bloody carnage, crushing the enemy.

Yoshida's next lines hark back to the poem "If to the Sea" from the *Man'yoshū*, extolling loyalty to the emperor:

SPIRIT: And should I fall, I will not regret my corpse lying exposed on the battlefield . . .
CHORUS: . . . achieving in its final zeal, eternity.
SPIRIT: Shield His Majesty.
CHORUS: Defend the Imperial Nation.
SPIRIT: Behold, then, the fierce god's unmatched strength of arms!
CHORUS: Then instantly shouting "destroy the enemy of the Land of the Sun Goddess," the Spirit summons the clouds and vanishes into thin air riding the thunderstorm.[66]

Another kabuki version of the dance-drama, under the same title, was written by playwright Segawa Haruo and performed at the Kado-za with Ichikawa Kodayū II in the lead role.[67] Urged on by the Bureau of Information, two *shinpa* companies and the *bunraku* puppet troupe in Osaka staged their own versions of *Loyal Souls of the War Dead* in 1942.[68]

Not all of the new-history premieres at the Kabuki-za were automatically

Fig. 7.10. *The First Western Ship*, Kabuki-za, 1942. Japanese shipwright Tsuzuki Toyoji (Onoe Kikugorō VI) proudly wearing sober craftsmen's clothes, raises the Japanese national flag to the top of the towering main mast, symbolizing Japan's ascendancy over the West. (From *Engei gahō*, April 1942)

Fig. 7.11. Yoshida Genjirō's *Loyal Souls of the War Dead*, based on the nō play of the same title. Matsumoto Kōshirō VII is the Guardian Spirit who defeats Japan's ancient enemies, in a clear parallel to defeating the American enemy. Kabuki-za, November 1942. (From *Engei gahō*, December 1942)

praised. *Heaven's Eye Mountain: A History Play*, staged in June, retold the story of Takeda Katsuyori's suicide in 1581. When forces loyal to Oda Nobunaga and Tokugawa Ieyasu routed his army at Heaven's Eye Mountain, Katsuyori took his life rather than surrender.[69] The play's theme of self-sacrifice was fully in tune with expectations of Japan's military establishment in the midst of war with America. Yet, seventeen-year-old Mishima Yukio, already embarked on a literary career, tartly observed: "There is nothing to say; *Heaven's Eye Mountain* is a stupid work."[70] *A Record of Imperial Loyalty,* Hirata Kōichi's dramatization of Yamate Kiichirō's novel, showed untamed, masterless samurai of the late Tokugawa period transformed into "human beings" through the power of imperial loyalty. The patriotic title seems to have been the best part of this production that played in the sweltering heat of August at the Kabuki-za. A critic was not afraid to write: "It's a play suited to a shabby little drop-curtain theater in Asakusa.[71] Nowadays, crude scripts appropriate to third-rate houses are being done on the Grand Kabuki stage in a careless manner. . . . I would like Grand Kabuki to perform plays of Grand Kabuki quality.[72]

Other new plays staged by kabuki troupes in 1942 were closely attuned to the victorious war mood. The Vanguard Theater was now fully in the war camp. In early 1942, the troupe returned to Tokyo from Kyoto, where members had spent six months shooting a film version of *Loyal Retainers of the Genroku Era* (see Fig. 11.1). Primed to make additional stage contributions to the war effort, the Vanguard Theater revived a long biographical play about the scholar-patriot Rai Sanyō, written by Fujimori Seikichi, first performed in 1931 and now designated a Bureau of Information Citizens' Drama Participating Play Selection.[73] And in April at the Shinbashi Enbujō, the troupe staged Hōjō Hideji's *Tanna Tunnel*, a gritty salute to the brave men who died between 1918 and 1935 digging Japan's longest railway tunnel (Fig. 7.12). Hōjō, who wrote 223 commercial play scripts in a long career, was often praised for his subdued language and dislike of melodrama. In this case the realistic staging of the tunneling operation and the powerful colloquial language of the sandhogs caught the favorable attention of playwright-critic Hasegawa Shin.[74] At the Minami-za in May and the Kado-za in June, Ichikawa Kodayū II and fellow kabuki actors teamed up with actresses to stage a Reinvigorated Drama bill of four plays. *The Tiger of Malaya*, an overnight pickle play, traced the Japanese conquest of Malaya and Singapore from prewar business dealings, through fierce jungle fighting in December 1941, to the opening of a hospital in the newly named City of Southern Light (Shōnanshi), the Japanese name for conquered Singapore.[75]

Ichikawa Ennosuke II, the most venturesome kabuki actor, acted in no new *ichiyazuke* plays in 1942 but contented himself with starring in revivals of *Submarine No. 6* at the Tōkyō Gekijō in April and other plays first staged by Ichikawa Sadanji II. In this way he solidified his claim to be Sadanji's successor and his status as leader of the New Commando Troupe. The word "kabuki" was dropped from the troupe's reformed name, Shin'ei Gekidan, indicating an openness to work with non-kabuki actors and actresses. Following Home Ministry orders that troupes should "rationalize" and "modernize" themselves, the eighty group members elected Ennosuke executive director (*rijichō*) and Ichikawa Jukai III deputy executive director (*fuku rijichō*), using nontheatrical terms for their positions. (Most kabuki "troupes" at this time were little more than groups of minor actors orbiting around a major star like Kichiemon or Kōshirō.) Under the reorganization, two Shōchiku officials were appointed to behind-the-scenes positions: Matsuo Kunizō became general manager (*sōmu*) and Inoue Isaburō troupe adviser (*komon*).[76]

In Osaka, Gōda Toku cranked out fifteen new scripts in 1942 for Shock Troop, New Commando, Reinvigorated Kabuki, and Kansai Grand Kabuki groups per-

Fig. 7.12. A Vanguard Theater production of Hōjō Hideji's *Tanna Tunnel*, Shinbashi Enbujō, 1942, featuring Nakamura Tsuruzō IV and Nakamura Kan'emon II. A realistic depiction of miners at work. (From Nakamura Umenosuke et al., eds., *Gurafu Zenshin-za*)

forming in Osaka and Kyoto. Among the more interesting of these is Gōda's *History of the World, About Face*, an overnight pickle play about Japan's new British and American enemies.[77] The title refers to the widely held perception that Japan's crushing victories in 1941–1942 had reversed the course of world history. The plot follows Japanese in Malaya who are forced by British police to repatriate to Japan just before the war and who then return to Malaya in triumph.[78] An even more interesting topic, Issei and Nisei living in America, was explored by Gōda in *Honolulu City*, set on a hill overlooking Pearl Harbor on December 7 and 8, 1941. Gōda imagined a family of Japanese immigrants and their American-born children wildly cheering the Japanese bombing of Pearl Harbor (the play will be discussed in Chapter 11).

Early 1942 found several thousand Japanese-American students stranded in Japan, unable to return to their families in America. Japanese authorities attempted through special measures to integrate these Nisei into homeland society. *Shingeki* plays were written and staged that painted in the worst possible light the tribulations of Nisei in America. In March, the Bureau of Information and the Nisei Students' Union staged *Twilight Bell over Hawai'i* at the cavernous Takarazuka Gekijō. Professional playwright Kikuta Kazuo wrote the script for film stars Hasegawa Kazuo and Yamada Isuzu, who volunteered to play the leading roles. The production had the twin aims of raising funds to support Nisei students in Japan and demonstrating "the struggle of the first and second generation Japanese in Hawaii and America in upholding and maintaining the prestige of the Japanese nation."[79] A year and a half later, Hasegawa and

Yamada revived the play for a month's commercial run at the Kitano Gekijō in Osaka. Another play, *Blood*, was said "to reveal the spirit of Japanese pioneers in a foreign land and their struggle to raise their offsprings as true Japanese." *Blood* was performed twelve times for Nisei audiences in June 1942 at the Kokumin Shingekijō (Citizens' New Theater, formerly the Tsukiji Shōgekijō) in Tokyo. The heroine is a Nisei girl living on the West Coast who kills herself because America's unjust immigration laws deny her the possibility of citizenship.[80] These *shingeki* plays conveyed to homeland audiences the reassuring message that overseas relatives remained unalterably "Japanese."[81] A different story was being played out by the several thousand Nisei soldiers who fought as American citizens against the Japanese Empire. But that story was not dramatized in kabuki or other Japanese theater genres during (or after) the war.

Rarely did Japanese playwrights write American roles into their war plays, although Chinese soldiers and civilians regularly appeared in kabuki plays set in China. According to the Bureau of Information, the War of Greater East Asia was "a racial war, in particular between the colored races and the white race," to determine the peace of the world.[82] We can easily imagine that Japanese actors would have felt uncomfortable playing the Caucasian enemy in this vituperative environment. In strong contrast to the stage, newspaper and magazine cartoons consistently lampooned enemy Americans, often in the persona of a bug-eyed, money-loving President Roosevelt. Special anti-Roosevelt radio dramas were created in the summer of 1942 and beamed to the United States by shortwave as part of a major propaganda war (*senden sen*). In several radio dramas Dictator Roosevelt is portrayed as an ignorant coward who has caused the war. One radio program snickered that even the "great coward Douglas MacArthur," who fled from the Philippines, was more popular than Roosevelt and would beat Roosevelt in the 1944 presidential election.[83] But playwrights and theater producers did not take up the challenge of turning the hated Roosevelt into a figure of fun and ridicule on the live stage.[84]

War Plays in *Kyōgen,* Nō, and *Bunraku*

Other traditional theater genres as well as kabuki developed new plays in "consonance with the times." Donald Keene has described two *kyōgen* comedies, *Treasure Island* and *The Fierce Eagle*, that mocked Anglo-American greed and cowardice.[85] A number of newly written war-related nō texts were set to music, choreographed, and staged as part of standard programs. Actors in the Kita School wrote and performed *Spirit of Reverence for the Emperor,* while Kanze School artists created *Imperial Warship.* One of the most interesting

new nō plays was *Yoshitsune*, staged by the Kanze School in 1942. It revived the myth that Minamoto Yoshitsune, the great hero of the Genji-Heike war, was not killed in Japan, but crossed the Japan Sea to Mongolia, where he became Genghis Khan. Appearing on his warhorse, the ghost of Yoshitsune/Genghis Khan recalls in a sung monologue how he laid waste to Asia and Europe.[86]

Nishino Haruo lists seventy-two newly written (*shinsaku*) nō plays that were composed during the war years although not necessarily staged. Of these, a dozen from 1941 to 1944 are deeply complicit in War of Greater East Asia propaganda. Texts are studded with wartime slogans and sayings: "Protect the Imperial Nation," "Land of the Gods," "Annihilate Pearl Harbor's Battle Fleet," "Peace in the Pacific Ocean," and the like.[87] One new play in 1942, *Warrior Gods,* "depicts those heroic loyal souls (*chūrei*) who sacrificed themselves in the fierce air attack on Pearl Harbor and thereafter became Warrior Gods (*gunshin*)." Another extols "continuous victories achieved in the early part of the War of Greater East Asia." Still another "celebrates the capture of Singapore," and a fourth play is dedicated "to the Crushed Jewels of Guadalcanal."[88] In a preface to *Fight without Quarter*, written for Hōshō School actors, author Takekoshi Kenzō says that he wrote "a year and a half after the emperor commanded the destruction of Britain and America, during a time our nation earned glorious victories over Britain and America."[89] The main role, the Deity of Ise Shrine, and the chorus sing the final powerful lyrics:

> Oh, Divine Wind! Oh, Divine Wind! Oh, Ancestral Deity of Ise, Imperial Majesty. . . . Hearts aflame, one hundred million subjects of the Divine Emperor, on the battlefield and at home, resolutely pledge complete destruction of Britain and America. Pray to the gods. One billion in the Great East, let us now rise, and together all nations exact vengeance. Insane America, violent Britain. Now is the time, with all our soul, attack, attack. Fight without quarter! Fight without quarter! (*Uchiteshi yaman, uchiteshi yaman*).[90]

Another nō play, *A Water-Soaked Corpse,* describes a loyal retainer who willingly gives his life for the emperor. The title is from the first line, "If to the sea, a water-soaked corpse," of a poem in the *Man'yōshū* (see Chapter 8). The author, Takenaka Minoru, took a recent event, Task Force Commander Admiral Yamaguchi Tamon's drowning during the Battle of Midway in June 1942, and cast it in the form of a defeated warrior nō play.[91] Part one recounts in chanted lyrics Admiral Yamaguchi's fame as director of the Pearl Harbor bombing operation. Yamaguchi's battle plan included not just the capture of the Hawaiian Islands, but invasion of the continental United States.[92]

> The War of Greater East Asia has shattered unmitigated shackles of American and British exploitation. This struggle, founded in morality, truly serves the burgeoning prosperity of one billion people. Admiral Yamaguchi's surprise attack on Hawai'i inaugurated the war magnificently and seized control of the seas.

In part two, the spirit of Yamaguchi, singing in the third person, recounts his death by drowning in the Battle of Midway:

> And so the imperial aircraft carrier received the enemy's blasts. And so the imperial aircraft carrier received the enemy's blasts. Roaring flames, red tongues sear the black night sky. Gradually, gradually, our battle flag tilts, falls forever beneath the sea. . . . Yet we remain men unsurpassed in loyalty. While all others have withdrawn, while all others have withdrawn, Admiral Yamaguchi Tamon stands fast on the sinking ship. Drink a toast, a cup of water, and call out "banzai" to his soul in the high clear sky.[93]

The play's atmosphere is elegiac, pensive, subdued.

It was not necessary to compose an entire nō drama to make a propaganda point. A writer could take a well-known melody from a popular nō play and set it to new war lyrics. For example, "North China Battlefront" was set to music from *Earth Spider* and "Our Incomparable Navy" to music from *Kurama Tengu* in 1937.[94] By 1942, events in the War of Greater East Asia had become the subject of heroic lyrics such as "December 8," "Independent Indochina," "Solomon Islands Naval Battle," "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere," "Guerrilla War," and "Natural Resources of the South."[95] The song "Regrets of America and England," set to music from *Kantan Village*, was typical in its truculent military attitude:

> The fleets of vaunted America and England, mere bubbles rising from the ocean floor. Transitory rulers of the Pacific, of evil designs and vicious deeds, once dreamed of a hundred years of glory for Hong Kong and Singapore. Let us judge the present world situation, seize our opportunity, and build a Great Sphere of Co-Prosperity. Roosevelt is smug and haughty! Our chance is now![96]

Bunraku, too, was touched by the irresistible call of patriotism. As we have seen, a highly successful puppet version of *Three Human Bombs* toured cities in the summer of 1932. Now, a decade later, the well-known puppet manipulator Kiritake Manjūrō proudly announced that *bunraku* performers were dedi-

Fig. 7.13. The *bunraku* drama *A Water-Soaked Corpse* (1942) invokes the spirits of sailors who have died in loyal service to the emperor. The play's title is from the first line of the well-known poem from the *Man'yōshū*: "If to the sea, a water-soaked corpse." (From *Engei gahō*, September 1942)

cating their art to the nation's cause: "Bunraku Puppet drama has remained unchanged since its creation over two hundred years ago [and] the repertoire too has seen little change. . . . We are putting all our efforts into making new plays on the theme of the War of Greater East Asia a huge success. We trust they will convey, if but slightly, our valiant soldiers' bravery."[97] I have found ten new *bunraku* plays written in support of the war that were staged between 1941 and 1945 (Fig. 7.13).[98] These pieces represented a major investment by *bunraku* artists in support of the war: new puppet figures had to be carved, painted, and costumed, and new music and lyrics composed and matched to newly created puppet movements.

Government Expectation of Sacrifice

Richard Storry points out that during Japan's war with Russia in 1904–1905, citizens were allowed greater political freedom than in the 1940s: "in truth, there

was much more open, candid dissent." It was possible during the earlier conflict for Yosano Akiko to publish her celebrated anti-emperor, antiwar poem addressed to her brother who was in the army forces attacking Port Arthur:

> Do not offer your life,
> The emperor himself does not go
> To battle.[99]

Thirty-eight years later, in mid-1942, in the midst of Japan's war with America, England, and China, no Japanese citizen could express such a dangerous thought in public. To the contrary, in volume after volume poets fervently praised self-sacrifice for the sake of nation and emperor.[100] A poem by Takeuchi Teruyo published in February 1942 is typical:

> If one thousand men are killed, two thousand men must be born.
> Giving birth, nurturing [a son] who offers his life for the emperor,
> This is the great duty of the mothers of Japan.[101]

In 1942, government announcements invariably began with the warning that Japan was embarked on the second year of its all-out war with the Anglo-American enemy, thereby stressing the severity of the current crisis. Citizens were exhorted to redouble their war efforts. A popular slogan listed the days of the workweek: "Monday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Friday."[102] The Bureau of Information used the tenth anniversary of the "China Affair" as an occasion to boost theater participation: "Under the guidance of the Bureau of Information, leading theatrical groups have started elaborate preparations for the presentation of the outbreak of the China Affair as a means of contributing to the accomplishment of the sacred war and the enhancement of national morale."[103] Including special "China Affair" celebrations, at least twenty war-related events were shoehorned into the Kabuki-za schedule in 1942. Members of the Tokyo Patriotic Production Association, the Military Reserve Officers' Aid Society, and other patriotic groups were treated to special performances of kabuki. Regular kabuki performances were cancelled to accommodate spring and autumn Extraordinary Worship Services at Yasukuni Shrine for "loyal souls of the war dead." On January 18, young actors of the Kabuki Club gave a one-time performance of Oka Onitarō's *East Asian Ocean* as part of a "Patriotic Fund-Raising Concert." First-rank kabuki casts performed for delegations from Thailand in March and from Burma in May. A new patriotic musical, *A Lightning Battle Strategy*, celebrated Japan's first Air Force Day, September 20.[104] And to honor Japan's military partners, the Kabuki-za

staged "Famous Operas of the Axis Powers," *Lohengrin* and *Tosca,* and excerpts from *The Barber of Seville, Faust,* and *Carmen*, sung by the Fujiwara Opera Company, as well as Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*.[105] In August, a special memorial photographic exhibition, "Record of the Malaya War," was displayed in the Kabuki-za lobby.

And this was not all that was expected of the Kabuki-za and other large theaters as the year came to a close.[106] On December 4, the Metropolitan Police announced that Shōchiku and Tōhō should voluntarily open one performance per month at their seven largest theaters free of charge to members of the Drafted Soldiers' Relief Association.[107] The Kabuki-za staged a weeklong "First Year Anniversary Celebration of the War of Greater East Asia" during which the theater accommodated meetings of the Naval Support Group and the Tokyo Patriotic Industrial Relief Association. Special events of the week included "An Evening of Welcome for the Army," a program of classical kabuki dance and music; presentation by kabuki actors of another fighter plane, "The Patriot" (Hōkokugo), to the navy; and a ¥60,000 cash donation to the military from the Tokyo Producers' Association.[108] "A Tribute to the Army" on December 8 had elite sponsorship of the Bureau of Information, the *Asahi* newspaper, and Shōchiku. Speeches by Ōtani Takejirō and military and civilian officials honoring the army were followed by a newsreel, "December 8," military songs played by the Shōchiku Symphony Orchestra, and a live narrative performance.[109] For the remainder of the war, Shōchiku managers placed military relief contribution boxes in the lobby of the Kabuki-za and other theaters and sold war mementos, with profits going to war industries.[110] At the end of the year, the League of Performing Arts and Culture became the Greater East Asia Performing Arts and Culture League, with a new president, kabuki scholar Kawatake Shigetoshi.[111] On a nuts-and-bolts level, the professional kabuki world was doing more than its share in support of the war.

Prime Minister Tōjō and Wholesome Drama

The year 1942 was a fertile period for the government to expand its guidance of culture on behalf of the war. When Prime Minister Tōjō addressed an Extraordinary Diet Session following the Pearl Harbor attack, he included in his speech expectations for wartime theater: "In this time of war, of course citizens feel anxiety in both their spiritual and material lives, and this may grow stronger in the immediate future. However . . . at this time it is natural to ameliorate our daily lives with wholesome entertainment. At this critical

stage in the nation's history, the government will promote such efforts . . . to the best of its ability."[112] People in the theater world were greatly honored to be noticed, and the phrase used by the prime minister, "wholesome entertainment" (*kenzen goraku*), was soon on everyone's lips.

A few days after the prime minister spoke to the nation, the *Japan Times & Advertiser* carried a long disquisition titled, not surprisingly, "Wholesome Drama, Cinema Advocated." The author, Kobiki S., asserted a special function for drama in time of war: "during this period of extreme tension," Japanese theater must promote a "tranquility or state of mental rest [that] would serve as a means of restoring mental energies and strength." But, he continued, "so-called Citizens' Dramas," although newly written, are a disappointment, "falling short of representing the unruffled inflexible characteristics of the Japanese." Wholesome dramas should "awaken the audience to the invaluably glorious qualities which we Japanese, as a highly cultured people, possess." Kabuki is the worst possible case, saddled with "insignificant classics" and dependent on "inadequate [performing] technique." "Veer away" from kabuki, Kobiki urged, and return to the "lofty and delicate ideals presented in [the] *Man'yōshū*." Drama created at the present moment should depict "the delicate sentiment, coupled with the highly human nature, of the Yamato race as well as the grand and utterly sublime willpower with which our race is gifted."[113] Seldom had kabuki's artistic qualities and dramas been so casually dismissed.

Shōchiku officials immediately pledged to follow the prime minister's request for wholesome drama. President Ōtani Takejirō quickly moved to place kabuki in a favorable light: "We express our profound gratitude that kabuki [is] considered wholesome theater within Prime Minister Tōjō's meaning" (that was not what the prime minister said).[114] In the lead article of the next issue of *Engei gahō,* Shōchiku executive Inoue Isaburō asked, "What is wholesome theater?" It is not amusement or art alone, he replied: "entertainment must offer comfort, purify the heart, give guidance, nourish the soul and ennoble daily life." As for kabuki:

> It is widely praised as our national art. . . . Even so, some kabuki plays are inappropriate in the present crisis, and their themes of decadence, gore, obscenity, and nonsense wield an immoral influence on audiences. Such plays must be entirely avoided. . . . Shōchiku acknowledges that the greatest need today is to stage famous plays for the sake of Greater Japanese Culture (*dai Nippon bunka*). . . . We in Shōchiku take no thought of self-interest and resolutely expunge from the depths of our hearts all shortsighted views. We burn with the desire to dedicate ourselves with-

> out limit to Greater Japanese Theater (*dai Nippon engeki*). In other words, a "good play" is "wholesome entertainment." Through our profession all of us must exert our efforts night and day in every way to slaughter our enemy.[115]

Although Shōchiku officials had claimed kabuki was wholesome, they now admitted that some kabuki plays were immoral and these should be suppressed for the sake of the war. In this, theater censors in the Special Higher Police were in full agreement.

Theater for the Masses

In 1942, the Bureau of Information focused its theatrical energies on three major initiatives that affected kabuki: it began to support Theater for the Masses, it continued to urge kabuki troupes to stage Citizens' Dramas, and it expanded the League of Touring Theaters. Let us look at how kabuki fared under each initiative.

As part of an overarching program to bring theater to ordinary citizens, the Bureau of Information released the capacious Teikoku Gekijō from its control in March and returned it to the Tōhō Theatrical Corporation for "general cultural productions," warning that the stage should not to be used for frivolous entertainments, like movies, but should showcase presentations that "exalt citizens' culture (*kokumin bunka no kōyō*)."[116] The bureau organized five days of gala performances at the Teikoku Gekijō to kick off its mass-theater campaign. Three days were devoted to unprecedented nō performances for the general public by Umewaka Rokurō. He proudly announced in interviews his intention to "abandon the reactionary system" of playing for the privileged few.[117] Two months later, in May, Umewaka shocked the conservative nō world even more by performing with actresses from the Takarazuka Musical Troupe to "popularize nō drama through a series of different performances."[118]

An ad in the *Miyako* newspaper, probably prepared by Tōhō or the Bureau, linked the mass theater initiative to Nazi cultural policies: "Just as Nazi Germany cries out for revolution and the rescue of its culture from the clutches of an elite leisure class, we must take note of the current plan proposed by the Umewaka nō school."[119] Popular variety entertainments (*kōdan*, *rakugo*, and *manzai*) usually seen in small specialty theaters were shown on the fourth day, while kabuki was relegated to the fifth and last day.

Tōhō president Kobayashi Ichizō eagerly jumped on the government's mass theater bandwagon. Under Kobayashi's direction, Tōhō producers created

eight extravagant musical comedies during 1941–1943, built around the wildly popular vaudeville-style comedians Furukawa Roppa and Enoken. Kobayashi blithely asserted his musicals were "wholesome, cheerful mass entertainment. They purify and correct people's living. They bring the beautiful Japanese spirit to life." He named the productions Tōhō Citizens' Dramas (*Tōhō kokumin geki*). But Kobayashi's nativist spin was belied by actresses' sexy costumes, scenes set in exotic foreign locales, music played on Western (enemy) instruments, and military stories presented as romances and farce-comedies. All of this was politically improper, potentially dangerous, and quite antithetical to Iizuka Tomoichirō's notion of a pure Japanese Citizens' Drama.

Kobayashi had been greatly influenced by American musical comedies and revues that he carefully studied during trips to New York in the 1920s. Nonetheless, Kobayashi declared that his Tōhō Citizens' Drama was "modern kabuki," thus directly challenging Shōchiku.[120] It seems unfair that Shōchiku's purely "Japanese" traditional kabuki should be pilloried for decadence while Tōhō's American-derived musical revues were praised for their "Japanese spirit." But Kobayashi, a former minister of industry, was too high in the political hierarchy to be challenged, and no censor questioned the inappropriate elements in "Tōhō Citizens' Dramas." And Tōhō's star comedians Roppa and Enoken brought in a huge audience.

Kabuki as Citizens' Drama

To show the government's support for the Citizens' Drama Movement, Prime Minister Tōjō personally presented the Bureau of Information Citizens' Drama Grand Prize for 1942 to Onoe Kikugorō VI and Nakamura Kichiemon I for "their correct interpretation of the classic drama" *Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy*. (For unstated reasons the judges again withheld the ¥3,000 prize money.) Kabuki troupes were especially active in this second year of the contest, submitting entries that won three prizes. The successful kabuki offerings glorified feudal loyalty and child sacrifice.[121] In Osaka, the Bureau of Information office conducted a separate Kansai Citizens' Drama Play Contest in 1942. Judges did not award a first prize but gave consolation prizes to two kabuki productions staged at the Ōsaka Kabuki-za: the classic drama of feudal loyalty *Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees* and Gōda Toku's *Umeda's Cloudy Shore*, a premiere.[122] Jitsukawa Enjaku II's portrayal of Kumagai Naozane in *Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani* at the Naka-za was named an Osaka Governor's Prize play for 1942.[123] Altogether, seven organizations

administered theater contests in 1942 and awarded prizes for the best plays or productions.[124] Despite initial worries, kabuki troupes were successful entrants in these contests. A new theater monthly, *Kokumin engeki* (Citizens' Drama), inaugurated in 1942, publicized the Citizens' Drama Movement and its several play contests.[125]

As Citizens' Drama came to be the touchstone of what was appropriate and worthwhile in Japanese theater, it is not surprising that to gain government approval producers and playwrights were inclined to call almost anything "Citizens' Drama." Ōyama Isao was incensed:

> In response to the times, many plays are being staged that are called national policy dramas, home front dramas, or war dramas. But in general they are of low artistic quality, and, to speak extremely, they are merely taking advantage of the situation. It is not too much to say these plays are commercialized pieces camouflaged to ride the wave of the moment. Despite the need, we do not get guidance plays that honestly guide or reform plays that truly reform.[126]

It was also true that the nature of Citizens' Drama was quite elastic. Nagata Hideo, the reformed proletarian playwright who was one of the judges of the Citizens' Drama contest in 1942, cautioned patience: "Of course Citizens' Drama is still in its early formative stage. We must wait ten or twenty years to discover the true fruits of the movement."[127] However, Japanese theater artists did not have this luxury.

Kabuki and the League of Touring Theaters

The bureau's third important initiative involving kabuki in 1942, and by far the most difficult to accomplish, was incorporating kabuki actors into the framework of the League of Touring Theaters. The league's managing director was Itō Kisaku, a highly respected stage designer and brother of dancer Itō Michio and theater director Senda Koreya (Itō Kunio). In 1942 the league directly managed thirteen full-time touring companies that toured constantly to villages, factories, mines, and military bases throughout the country. They contributed 90 percent of the 1,070 productions staged by the league in the first year of operation.[128] The league also arranged mini-tours of a few days or a week for another twelve troupes.[129] The league turned out to be a highly successful government initiative for *shingeki* and other modern theater forms. But the league was not set up to handle traditional theater: league officials

did not attempt to bring nō, *kyōgen*, or *bunraku* performers into the league, and it proved extremely difficult to match kabuki to the practical needs and philosophy of league touring.

In 1942, the league directly managed three semi-kabuki troupes contributed by Shōchiku.[130] Each was composed of eight or nine lower-ranking kabuki actors paid by Shōchiku, two or three actresses, and a manager. The three troupes toured constantly through the year and together gave 337 performances of twentieth-century kabuki dramas, such as *The Tale of Shuzenji*, a few selected kabuki dances like *Two Lions* and *The Wisteria Maiden*, and often a contemporary play. These troupes integrated fairly well into the system. The actors were young and of modest status. They were used to grueling schedules in commercial urban theaters. These younger actors did not attempt leading roles in kabuki dramatic classics during their tours. Perhaps the old dramas were too difficult for the young actors, or Shōchiku felt a proprietary interest in preserving *The Village School* and *Kumagai's Battle Camp* for its Grand Kabuki stars.

Four commercial kabuki troupes signed up for mini-tours in 1942. The Vanguard Theater and the Shock Troop Kabuki Troupe from Kansai each performed for a week in obscurity.[131] In contrast, short tours by Ichimura Uzaemon and Ichikawa Ennosuke earned headlines. Newspaper announcements said that Uzaemon, then president of the Greater Japan Actors' Association, was bringing a splendid national theater art to working class audiences. Uzaemon described his awe when 25,000 textile workers, mostly young women, cried "banzai" for the emperor before he stepped on an outdoor stage near Suwa Lake to begin a program of kabuki classics.[132] Publicists went all out when the "Promotion of Increased Production Ichikawa Ennosuke Grand Kabuki Troupe" toured the Ashio copper mining district. Impressed local officials built a revolving stage solely for his visit. Journalist-critic Ōzawa Ryōzō rhapsodized that when Ennosuke appeared on stage in national uniform, the audience went wild. Representatives from the Bureau of Information, the League of Touring Theaters, the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, and the Industrial Patriotic Society fell over themselves in praise of Ennosuke's program of three traditional plays.[133] No one asked before or during the tour, "Where are the new plays that address the current war situation?" Despite the ballyhoo, we must note that the stars toured for just three or four days.[134] Two more years would pass before important kabuki actors were forced to make extensive domestic tours.

Kabuki posed special touring problems. Perhaps a fresh, new audience was out there in the countryside eager to see their first kabuki performance. And it could be argued that kabuki actors brought a certain cultural cachet to the

league. Also it was said that touring would be useful for conservative kabuki. "Young kabuki actors, whose hearts and bodies are overflowing with a spirit of hope and bright joyfulness, will discard the shell of old kabuki and advance toward a new kind of theater."[135] And yet, in the end, kabuki did not fit very well into the league's system. Let me suggest several reasons why this was so.

First, excellent kabuki performance is dependent on first-rate actors, but major kabuki actors were loath to abandon lucrative commercial careers to tour through the boondocks. Kōshirō was in his seventies and Baigyoku, Kōshirō, Sōjūrō, Uzaemon, Nizaemon, and Enjaku were in their sixties. They were too old to become peripatetic performers. Second, the league was committed to small, low-budget touring companies. After carefully examining the kabuki repertory, league officials decided that for purely logistical reasons, "not one play exactly suits touring":

> *The Subscription List* has a fine story and a good moral, but the large musical ensemble is impossible to provide. Plays in the first rank like *Five Great Powers That Secure Love* are too long for touring. History plays set in the Tokugawa period are close to people's hearts, but few are done because the elaborate costumes and wigs that make productions interesting are too expensive. Domestic plays (*sewamono*) require large casts, and that, too, is a problem.[136]

Third, kabuki was saddled with the old accusation of immorality: too many kabuki plays advocated hedonism and glorified criminal behavior. Such objections had been raised throughout kabuki's history, but in the current war crisis, charges of selfishness, egoism, or antisocial behavior carried extra weight. The government desperately wanted each imperial subject to be totally, uncompromisingly devoted to the country's wartime needs. Simple common sense urged that positive, "wholesome" entertainment was needed, as Prime Minister Tōjō had said. Why should the league trouble itself with questionable kabuki plays? Writing in late 1942, Takaoka Senno explained the league's moral stance vis-à-vis kabuki: "Kabuki's beauty exhibits the filth of the era in which it was born and nourished. . . . If for any reason a play appears to exert a bad influence, we will not stage it. . . . We proclaim loudly that we must have new plays that edify the spectator."[137]

Fourth, the league's complex play selection process weighed against kabuki scripts. In 1942, a kabuki script submitted to the league had to be unanimously approved by the league's script examination committee, consisting of representatives of five organizations: the league, the Culture Guidance Section of the Bureau of Information, the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, the

Greater Japan Industrial Patriotic Society, and the Central Association of Industry. Each group had its own agenda, and a script was automatically rejected if faulted by any member on "artistic, political, thematic, or social" grounds.[138] In practice few kabuki plays were accepted. Major kabuki stars were allowed to perform a small number of traditional pieces when on tour: favorites like *The Village School* and act 5 or 6 of *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* could be staged with six to eight actors, and a dance like *Wisteria Maiden* required a single dancer and one or two assistants.[139] Generally, a kabuki troupe toured with a program of two short plays that were repeated at every stop.[140]

From the beginning, most league plays were written expressly for league audiences. As Ibaraki has explained: "The league's focus was never on taking productions from large city theaters and touring them to the countryside. The movement was not about theater per se. Wholesome plays that praised nationalist thought and cultivated citizens' culture were toured in support of national war policies."[141] Traditional kabuki dramas were the province of "large city theaters" that were peripheral to the league's major interest.

The league commissioned scores of timely scripts to meet its goals. The well-regarded Literary Theater and the Actors' Theater staged the *ichiyazuke* plays *Red Clouds over Leyte*, *Invasion Morning, Sounds of the Sea,* and *Company Commander Wakabayashi.*[142] Pledge plays (*sensei geki*) designed to rouse the audience to vow greater war efforts were widely performed: *Citizens Also Fight* (112 performances), *Toward Increased Production* (201), *The War of Greater East Asia* (157), and *December Eighth* (30). Forty playwrights and novelists contributed scripts, among them well-known authors Kikuchi Kan, Kaneko Yōbun, Kawaguchi Matsutarō, Kikuta Kazuo, Nakano Minoru, Hōjō Hideji, Mafune Yutaka, and Yaji Ryūichirō.[143] Some troupes also improvised up-to-the-minute news sketches delivered in rapid song-speech style influenced by Nazi *sprechchor* propaganda techniques.[144] Staid traditional kabuki plays were a world apart from this frantic dramatic creativity that addressed the needs of the moment.

And finally, kabuki was the flag bearer of the passé, commercial theater system that league touring and Citizens' Dramas were expected to replace. In 1942, league official Senga Akira listed the weaknesses of commercial theater from the league's point of view, reiterating ideas that Citizens' Drama founder Iizuka Tomoichirō first expressed in 1937–1938. He contrasted these faults with the positive qualities of league productions:

1. In order to attract an audience, commercial theater fabricates a false, artificial beauty that dazzles the spectator but is not inherent in the

meaning of the play. League plays, in contrast, arise naturally out of their dramatic material.

2. Commercial theater uses the star system to attract an urban audience. Since these stars will not tour the countryside, rural audiences are limited to seeing third-rate performers. However, the league attracts first-rank actors . . . integrated into established troupes that practice ensemble acting. This assures that league audiences enjoy a highly artistic experience.
3. The level of excellence of a performance should correlate with the educational and cultural level of the audience. Troupes that belong to the league demonstrate high artistic levels and are therefore able to train and educate lower-level audiences in the countryside. Commercial troupes cannot, or will not, educate rural audiences.[145]

Public Good versus Private Profit

In the conclusion of Senga's article, he asserts: "Our strong league could never have been born within the capitalist system that is based on the calculation of profit and the achievement of personal gain."[146] The major example of commercial theater that Senga deplored was kabuki. Senga dreamed of a selfless theater in which actors and producers worked for the good of the community rather than for "the heartless and corrupt money-culture of the city."[147] Senga's views emerged from a "growing mood of anti-capitalism in Japan."[148]

Touring was powerfully egalitarian in that audiences were not determined by class or wealth. From our perspective today, we clearly see that expansion of the league and promotion of Citizens' Dramas were complementary aspects of an overall government cultural policy aimed at (1) shifting the locus of performance from large cities to the countryside, (2) loosening monopoly control wielded by commercial, capitalist producers, (3) forcing high art to speak to the common person, and (4) increasing the number of war-related plays in order to maximize theater's contribution to the war effort.

The fundamentally anticapitalist position of league leaders reflected a general government concern that "capitalist inroads" were detrimental to the state's social engineering goals. For example, planners of the huge land settlement program in Manchuria envisioned a network of "cooperativist" farms that would be self-sufficient. As Louise Young has written of Manchuria: "rural reformers hoped to build a utopian alternative to the flawed modernity that capitalism had wrought."[149] Similarly, Prasenjit Duara argues that the government plan for "cooperative management" in rural Manchuria was

an "attempt to fend off the demons of capitalist modernity" and "to discourage the profit motive."[150] The impetus to wrest theater performance out of urban commercial control was premised on an ideological commitment to a utopian view of precapitalist cooperative rural communities, on the one hand, and on the practical need to ameliorate harsh working conditions for laborers in munitions factories and mines, on the other hand. Lacking bricks-and-mortar national theaters or citizens' theatrical troupes under direct state control, the bureau found that touring under league auspices was a useful lever to force commercial producers to shift from a "profit first" to a "public service first" policy through direct action and without debate or contention.[151] I suggest that moral concerns motivated the theater debate more than economic considerations. Capitalism was immoral because it was based on individual selfishness. To the contrary, a moral citizen imbued with Japanese Spirit would happily sacrifice self-interest to achieve a common good. The rational for shunting elite urban kabuki aside was primarily "moral."

The League, Citizens' Drama, and the Literary Theater Troupe

In early 1942, the bureau and the league asked the Literary Theater, the only remaining important *shingeki* troupe, to give up its independent status and move permanently into the league touring system.[152] What happened to the Literary Theater casts light on the whole process of creating Citizens' Dramas and touring them via league-affiliated troupes. It was an enormous undertaking for the league to recruit new member troupes, schedule tours, coordinate with local sponsors, obtain funding, and create new plays from scratch. Also, the War of Greater East Asia was in an early stage, and the government did not yet wield absolute power. Our story begins with a lengthy newspaper article that described resistance within the Literary Theater to the bureau's "guidance." There is no similar case in kabuki, so I will quote the article at some length:

> Literary Theater Exclusive Guidance by Bureau of Information:
> Conflicting Opinions Divide Troupe
>
> The Bureau of Information considered forming new theater troupes that would exemplify the qualities of Citizens' Drama. But setting up new troupes has proved difficult, so an established group, the Literary Theater, was selected to perform exclusively for the bureau. *Yellow Dust* is the Literary Theater's current production at the Kokumin Shingekijō. The bureau

> is negotiating to have the troupe revive the play under the bureau's direct management. The bureau wants the Literary Theater to perform four times a year in Tokyo and otherwise tour "national policy dramas" in the countryside. But, recognizing the troupe's relatively independent status, this is not being required. A powerful group, tentatively named the Leadership Committee, is now calling for all *shingeki* productions to exemplify the nature of Citizens' Drama. Committee members are officials of the Bureau of Information and the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, the head of the Japan Dramatists' Association, the general manager of the League of Touring Theaters, and the league's general secretary. An announcement by some troupe members . . . favoring the proposal has been opposed by . . . others who fear the Literary Theater will lose its independence. Because this division of opinion exists among members, the troupe's position is not easy, and the bureau's campaign has gone aground.[153]

The Leadership Committee composed of government officials was a transparent device to exert pressure on the troupe. The bureau wanted to tour *Yellow Dust* because the play showed Chinese civilians and Japanese railroad guards interacting in a warm and humorous light during a lull in the fighting in China. It is notable that the censor did not object to informing the public that some theater artists opposed government policy.

Next, a Citizens' Drama activist charged the Literary Theater with "dilettantism" for staging frivolous plays imbued with Western individualism, naming *Fanny*, *Pasteur*, and Thornton Wilder's *Our Town*.[154] In the end, the wishes of the bureau prevailed, and in mid-1942, the troupe formed the Literary Theater Touring Squad (Bungaku-za Idōtai). Reflecting the powerful militaristic mood of those heady times, the troupe called itself a "squad" or "platoon," using the military term *tai*. Like other league troupes, the Literary Touring Squad was organized along military lines. Members abandoned individual dress: male actors wore national uniforms of tunic, cap, and leggings, and actresses wore bloused trousers (*monpei*) and long-sleeved, belted work blouses. When the squad arrived in a town or village, its members marched briskly down the main street in military formation with its unit flag waving overhead. At the front of the formation was Squad Leader Tanaka Chikao, an admired *shingeki* playwright and a Catholic.[155] Troupe members rose at dawn, and before sharing a communal breakfast, they sang in unison the Touring League Pledge:

> We act with the pride of being imperial subjects,
> We volunteer to fulfill our mission joyfully in trial and deprivation,

> We demonstrate courtesy and virtue through harmonious cooperative effort,
> We discipline ourselves sternly on the model of our leaders,
> We devote ourselves to training and practice in our art.[156]

Troupe members were not allowed to smoke or eat in public.[157]

The league managed tours according to a carefully prescribed procedure. Each performance had an institutional sponsor who provided local transportation, housing, food, and a performance space, often a large room or an outdoor platform. Three organizations were extremely active sponsors: in the first year of league operation, 670 performances were sponsored by the Greater Japan Industrial Patriotic Society, 214 by the Central Association of Industry, and 140 by the Imperial Rule Assistance Association.[158] The self-interest of the industrial sponsors is obvious: the league provided owners of factories and mines with nearly free entertainment for their workers.

Kabuki Restricted

Greater restrictions on kabuki and other forms of theater could now be justified by the extended war. Kishida Kunio articulated the government's position on censorship and guidance of theater in an essay, "Theater and Politics," published in 1942. In it he argued that government regulation of theater was normal everywhere and at all times, beginning with the Greeks and ending with Nazi Germany and present-day Japan. Kishida was a French-educated playwright admired for depicting middle-class characters in warmly humanistic comedies. Here, writing as head of the Cultural Division of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, he was a complete apologist for government domination of theater:

> Theater production is regulated and play scripts are censored by the government in our country . . . to assure that the policies established by the state are implemented. . . . In the present war of total mobilization, theater's task is to help the nation win victory. . . . Therefore, art can never stand alone; it should always be considered together with politics and economics. . . . Theater should enhance citizens' spirit (*kokumin seishin*). New theater troupes must break the hold of individualism (*kojinshugi*). . . . Nothing is more important for theater artists than to give complete political cooperation in order to gain total victory in this war and assure the eternal prosperity of our national order.[159]

Government agencies had long sought a national Theater Law that would mandate the full symbiosis between politics and theater that Kishida described. In late 1942, rumors swirled that the cabinet would at last send a draft of a Theater Law to the Diet for enactment. Then the rumors died. The Diet did not find time to debate theater issues in 1942 (or in later years), and for the third year in a row a Theater Law was not passed.

The Special Higher Police continued to censor kabuki play scripts and performances using a patchwork of existing regulations, ordinances, and decrees. The number of play scripts examined by the Tokyo censor in 1942 was 3,409, about 10 percent more than 1941, indicating that theater production had not declined. On the face of it, the figures suggest a light censor's hand: 1,996 scripts were passed without hindrance (*shishō nashi*), 24 received a warning (*chūi*) for improper stage action, 370 were ordered to have dialogue revised in part (*ichibu teisei*), 19 were withdrawn (*torisage*), and the number denied (*hi'nin*) was zero.[160]

In 1932, playwright-critic Ikeda Daigo had been able to shrug off the bordello atmosphere of *Message of Love from Yamato* to assure readers that because of Chikamatsu's "rich human emotions," the play was a "splendid work."[161] A decade of war later, in 1942, producers understood that traditional kabuki plays based on erotic love were not likely to be allowed. Nor were plays glorifying criminal behavior. Censors usually explained that they were suppressing decadence and immorality. While it produced many absurdities, police censorship was not unreasoned. For example, when the censors banned popular love suicide plays in kabuki, it was because the plays glorify young men and women who foolishly follow selfish romantic attachments (*ninjō*) and thereby desert family and social obligations (*giri*). In gangster plays, such as *Benten the Thief*, the antihero might go unpunished for theft or murder. Such behavior was impermissible in 1942: as the slogan said, "No personal desires until victory." Individualistic behavior was not simply immoral; it constituted disloyalty to the imperial cause. It was hardly unique to Japan to squeeze drama from the conflict between the individual and society. A standard American movie plot during World War II had a soldier or sailor parting from a wife or lover in order to go out and "kill Japs." He was often killed himself, dying for democracy. In order to normalize and make acceptable the deaths of thousands of soldiers, military indoctrination on both sides of the Pacific taught that sacrifice for the nation constituted a higher moral good than personal desires or attachments.

Some kabuki supporters continued to agrue that Chikamatsu Monzaemon's

great love suicide plays, written for the puppet theater in the eighteenth century and adopted into kabuki, should be allowed. In Osaka, Shirai Matsujirō pointed out that the script of Chikamatsu's *Love Suicides at Amijima* had been extensively rewritten four times since the play's premiere in 1720. Each revision matched the mood of a new era. People change, he said, so shouldn't even the finest play alter with the times? Speaking for Shōchiku theaters in the Kansai district under his management, Shirai offered a practical solution: "I want to listen to criticism of the moment, revise scripts that must be revised, and undergo much instruction in order to develop and nourish kabuki splendidly in the soil of Japan."[162] Shirai undoubtedly hoped his deference to Osaka's censor would lead to approval for a fifth revision of *Love Suicides at Amijima*.[163] The censor, however, continued to reject the play.

Writing in *Engei gahō*, theater critic Imaya Kyūhei used the device of a first-time "Spectator A" to offer criticisms of *Scarface Yosaburō*, an out-of-favor gangster play at the Kabuki-za — an incomprehensible story, an immoral love affair, and characters of no interest to ordinary spectators.[164] Taking the opposite tack, the critic Hayashi Yawara attempted to defend Chikamatsu Monzaemon's *A Message of Love from Yamato*, the most popular of all love suicide plays, by pointing out scenes of virtuous behavior. The plot is standard: Chūbei, a love-besotted merchant, is goaded by a rival to buy out the brothel contract of his lover, Umegawa. Since Chūbei has no money of his own, he uses 250 gold pieces entrusted to his care, knowing he will be executed for theft. Umegawa swears she will follow him in death. Hayashi praised the story's powerful emotions but admitted that the love between Chūbei and Umegawa smacked of hedonism (*kyōraku shugiteki*) and the philosophy of love over all (*ren'ai shijōshugi*). However, when Umegawa longs to meet her mother and Chūbei wishes to see his father one last time, Hayashi insisted these honest feelings are "within the great family system passed down from the feudal period that can hardly be comprehended through individualistic humanism (*kojinteki ningenshugi*)." Above all, Chikamatsu was a patriotic writer because he balanced human feelings and duty. Human feelings exist in every society, but a sense of social obligation must be instilled and nourished in human hearts. Hayashi concluded, "Some societies do not recognize social obligations," meaning barbaric America. And if the national emergency requires producers to strike some plays from the repertory, Hayashi asks rhetorically: "Is this not a small sacrifice compared to the soldier who gives his life for the nation?"[165] In the end, these published opinions did not move the censor. Chikamatsu's love suicide plays were banned from Kansai and Tokyo stages through the remaining three years of the war.

Censorship could be exercised in other ways, as well. From the government's point of view, it was better to prevent undesirable actions before they occurred. In 1942, the Bureau of Information set up a system to effect total proactive control over the content of the five theater magazines currently published.[166] Journal editors conferred with bureau officials at monthly meetings of a newly formed Editorial Consultative Committee, where they showed the contents of future issues.[167] Before manuscripts were even written, bureau officials were able to reject objectionable topics or authors.[168] The squeeze on theatrical publications was a part of an overall government plan to cut by one-half book, magazine, and newspaper releases throughout the country.[169]

Kabuki at the End of 1942

We can see the hand of bureau officials working through the Editorial Consultative Committee to kabuki's disfavor in 1942. The August issue of *Engei gahō* featured a provocatively titled piece, "Is Kabuki Drama Unwholesome Drama?" by one of kabuki's most persistent detractors, Ōyama Isao. He reiterated the view that "at this time of unprecedented national emergency," audiences and artists must accept the fact that decadent (*taihaiteki*) kabuki plays can no longer be performed.[170]

After the committee met monthly through 1942, it published a transcript of a long roundtable discussion among eighteen theater author-editors that was moderated by officials of the Bureau of Information and Imperial Rule Assistance Association. The first problem discussed was kabuki, "a theater that gives the ordinary citizen no pleasure." This led to a probably preplanned and deliciously arch exchange between Atsumi Seitarō, assistant editor of *Engei gahō*, and the magazine's senior editor, Kubota Mantarō:

ATSUMI: I wish to ask the opinion of my distinguished colleagues. Overall, in the present emergency should kabuki continue or not? Should kabuki be allowed to exist or not?

KUBOTA: Is it not that kabuki cannot be disallowed?

ATSUMI: By which you mean . . . ?

KUBOTA: I mean its existence can't be helped because there is no alternative to kabuki at the present time.[171]

This was faint praise for Japan's "national theater."

What was the national mood within which kabuki contended for favor at the end of the first year of the War of Greater East Asia? How did the Japanese ruling elite see the nation and Japanese culture in late 1942? Naturally, Japa-

nese of all classes felt enormous pride and gratification that the Imperial Army and Navy had succeeded so amazingly well. But the government feared overconfidence. The war was not over and it was much too soon to celebrate. An official statement from the Foreign Ministry on December 8, 1942, conjured up gloomy images of "storm clouds" and "ominous skies" that had precipitated Japan's "wrathful indignation" one year before:

> December 8, 1941 — Out of angry, fomenting skies, thick with turbulent resentment, fell the bombshell which rocked the world to its innermost core. Out of stormy skies, heavy with wrathful indignation, fell the bomb of bitter protest, blasting away the smug self-complacency of a startled America, Britain, and Holland. Out of ominous skies whose angry clouds slowly gathered from long decades past, came the final eruption which started the War of Greater East Asia.[172]

Typical of government statements about the war, all of these dire events passively "happened." They were not actions initiated by Japan.

Reflecting this serious mood, at the turn of the year, the *Japan Times & Advertiser* changed its name to the *Nippon Times*, "a new name which would clearly signify the enhanced national character of the . . . paper."[173] And beneath the headline "Nippon Show-Goers Turn Nationalistic," the newly named newspaper marveled at kabuki's flourishing state at a time when Japan was in furious combat with powerful new enemies:

> The year 1942 was a period in which the national prestige of Nippon was enhanced in a most spectacular manner and the nation's fame rose to the highest position ever attained in its history of over 2,600 years. . . . Confirming this trend was the phenomenal boom witnessed in Kabukidom. From the beginning to the close of the year, theaters staging Kabuki plays . . . were packed invariably by capacity audiences at every performance. . . . Theater-lovers' interest was concentrated on plays specially characteristic of this country in preference to others of less "national" nature.[174]

In late 1942, kabuki audiences were recovering from the disastrous lows of 1938 and 1939, but the *Nippon Times* editorial writer exaggerated their size, presumably for patriotic purposes.

Kabuki artists also pled their case with audiences every day when they introduced the day's program in formal stage announcements (*kōjō*). The announcement delivered at the Naka-za during the January 1942 program was given over almost entirely to staking out a claim for kabuki's useful participation in the nation's Sacred War:

> I speak humbly. Glorious in dignity and power, our Imperial Military Forces energetically sweep the Four Seas, thus assuring our nation's brilliant future. . . . At this time, on this occasion, our most momentous concerns are morale and entertainment in time of war. This theater will play its part in our theatrical culture, paying all the more attention to the requirements of national policy. This year we will strive to achieve wholesome play content and pledge to face every difficulty with renewed and redoubled commitment. . . . All the stars of Kansai Grand Kabuki have come together this month, passionately resolved to serve a patriotic theater. . . . The best plays have been reexamined historically and their beauty increased, while new scripts, handled with an artistic conscience, strongly manifest Japanese spiritual beauty. In this time of war, elaborate staging could verge on frivolity, but we have strictly guarded against this: we achieve richly magnificent staging in order to show the cultural brilliance of Japan's glorious past. Dear patrons, be at ease for we have exercised the greatest possible caution in matters of expense and running time. We beg that in today's performance you will find comfort (*ian*) in the drama itself.[175]

Miyake Shūtarō, a prolific kabuki scholar and *Engei gahō* editor, would have none of this. He expressed what almost certainly was the government's official position regarding kabuki in late 1942: "Through the years of my youth, kabuki continued to be cursed by its shadowy tradition of indecent and degenerate plays. Today, we welcome the time when a wholesome, meaningful Citizens' Drama is in the process of being established. . . . Nothing pleases me more than experiencing in the depths of my heart the great difference between theater of the past and the theater of the present."[176] Miyake might give a pass to traditional history plays, with their themes of loyalty and sacrifice, but the other face of kabuki, its darker visage of egoistic lust and insouciant crime, was out of place in the new Japan. Like the officials of the League of Touring Theaters, Miyake suggested setting kabuki aside and devoting the nation's limited resources to new Citizens' Dramas, molded to meet the exact needs of the nation at war.

Increasingly, there was no space outside of government control for personal or private opinions. In September, Fuwa Suketoshi, head of the Bureau of Information's Theater and Film Guidance Section, lectured theater writers on their responsibilities to help create a Citizens' Drama useful to the war: "It is of course quite unnecessary to say this, but it is not enough for writers to cooperate from the standpoint of a theater critic. Our citizens should enjoy a theater

that fills our hearts with joy and well-being. The great mission of critics and journal editors is to take a step forward and, standing in the shoes of cultural guidance officials, give positive guidance to the theater. . . . It is a matter of proper attitude and thought."[177] That is, *Engei gahō* writers should abandon an individual critical stance and write what the Bureau of Information says.

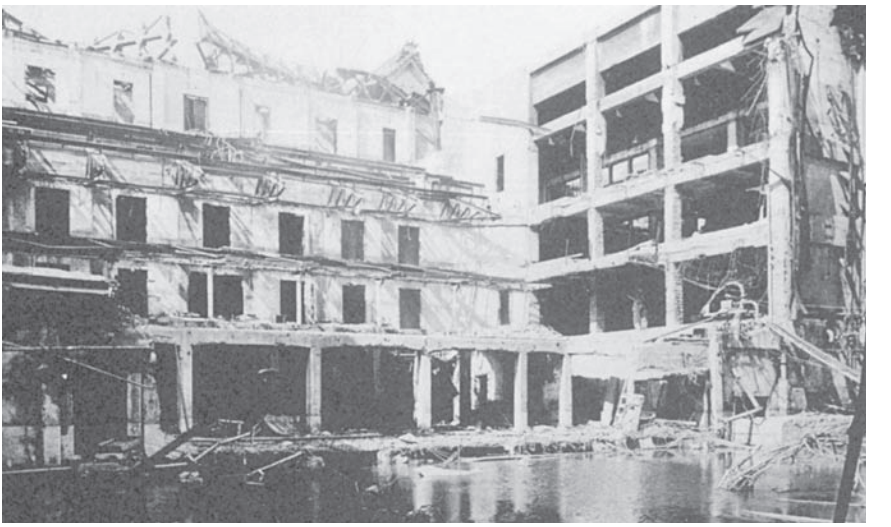
Now that the war was in everyone's consciousness, kabuki's dramatic fictions had to compete with stories of real Japanese dying every day while fighting for the nation. Japan's most honored playwright, Kikuchi Kan, wrote on October 8, 1942, a tribute to the officers of two midget submarines who had died during an unsuccessful suicide mission to sink the American cruiser USS *Chicago* in Sydney Harbor:

> Like every member of the Japanese Army and Navy . . . the four heroes of the Second Special Attack Submarine Flotilla, in their surprise attack on Sydney Harbor, thought only of accomplishing their mission at any sacrifice, the goal of the Bushido. Without being armed with a strong and immutable faith, belief in their duties, and unwavering and death-defying valor and courage, it would have been impossible for the four heroes to complete their long underwater voyage of scores of days in grueling heat, to find consummation of the spirit of Bushido in death.[178]

Despite kabuki's critics, the astute managers of commercial kabuki were still reaping excellent profits, as war workers, servicemen, and the newly rich crammed into theaters. The managers and leaders of kabuki were doing everything in their power to help support the war; and the war, to date, had been good to kabuki. But within a year, the edifice of Grand Kabuki would crack, and kabuki would be nearly destroyed as Japan descended into the hell of defeat.

PART THREE

Defeat and Survival | 1943 – 1945



During the last eighteen months of the war, the Kabuki-za in Tokyo was dark, closed first by government decree on March 5, 1944, and then gutted by American bombs on the evening of May 24, 1945. (From Nagayama Takeomi, ed., *Kabuki-za hyakunen-shi, honbun hen, 1*)

CHAPTER EIGHT

Kabuki and Japan's "Decisive Battle" | 1943

Fight to the death!
—Slogan, 1943

Kabuki should be transferred to government management as quickly as possible.
—Scholar Kawatake Shigetoshi, 1943

As a 1943 New Year's greeting, kabuki actor Bandō Mitsugorō VIII shared a sober poem with his fans: "All the more shall my birth and life be worthwhile, if I die under His Majesty the Emperor's sacred flag."[1]

In late January, Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki cautioned members of the Imperial Diet that the War of Greater East Asia was entering a critical stage. Looked at in the proper light, the national crisis presented an opportunity to be seized. Therefore, his administration "welcomed this time when a 'decisive battle' will yield total victory."[2] The decisive battle (*kessen*) was a strategic concept developed by American naval officer Alfred Mahan to overwhelm a naval opponent.[3] At an appropriate time and place, Japan would hurl its combined military forces against the American navy in a single crushing blow. The greater spiritual nature of His Majesty's Imperial Forces would overwhelm the enemy's material advantage, and a chastened America would sue for peace. Needless to say, this strategic situation did not arise. It was a fantasy.

On February 10, ten days after the prime minister's encouraging address, a military spokesman told Diet members that Japanese military forces had withdrawn from Guadalcanal. Eight months before, in June 1942, a military spokesman had lied to the Diet, saying the navy's defeat at Midway had been a victory. So this was the government's first public admission of defeat in the Pacific War. The military spokesman praised equally the courage of the evacuated soldiers, who had survived for months on roots and seawater, and

the "brilliant strategy of withdrawal deployment" executed by the naval command. As for the 20,000 Japanese who had died in the island's jungles and swamps, Diet members were asked to "avenge those heroes who fell, leaving a burning eternal hate for the Americans."[4]

War reports issued by Imperial General Headquarters consistently puffed up presumed victories so that the public gained an increasingly distorted picture as the war continued. Iritani Toshio concludes that deceptive news reports by the Bureau of Information and Imperial General Headquarters "succeeded in sustaining the people's fighting spirit up to the very end," with the tragic consequence that the war was prolonged, and suffering increased for millions of people throughout Asia.[5]

The news was bad from Europe as well. The elite German Sixth Army, "poised to smash into Stalingrad," was surrounded and compelled to surrender to Soviet forces in February.[6] In May, Field Marshall Rommel's desert army was beaten at El Alamein and driven from Africa, allowing British and American armies to capture Sicily three months later and force Italy out of the war.

On May 29, the Japanese garrison on Attu Island in the Aleutian chain committed suicide in futile charges against a superior American invasion force. They were faithfully carrying out the "dash forward," or *maishin*, defense specified in Japanese military doctrine. Official Japanese reaction was frenzied. Slogans in the press glorified the sacrificed Warrior Gods: "Two Thousand Departed Spirits and More Protect the Nation," "Hospitalized and Unable to Fight, All Kill Themselves," and "Attu Island Defense Garrison Soldiers Die Honored Heroes." Another slogan called for public retribution: "One Hundred Million Pledge Vengeance and Destruction."[7]

Reviewing the state of Japanese theater in late 1943, critic Ozawa Ryōzō regurgitated standard phrases of support for the war: "In view of the counterattack by America and Britain and the approaching decisive battle, we in the theater world advance total national mobilization and, with the strength of one hundred million souls, single-mindedly boost our nation's war strength."[8] The sacrificed lives, a harbinger of greater carnage to come, gave rise to songs, poems, and plays commemorating the Crushed Jewels (*gyokusai*) of Attu. In July, the Army Information Office awarded a grand prize of ¥1,000 to "A Citizen's Song: Great Deeds of Attu Island's Bloodied Heroes," which began:

Frozen sword edge in the Northern Sea,
One thousand select men
And more stand together,
Shields of Attu Island.[9]

Two commercial theater troupes staged overnight pickle plays about the Attu debacle. In Yagi Ryūichirō's *Island of Fog*, charismatic *shinpa* actress Mizutani Yaeko played a widowed mother who visits Attu Island in a dream. The mother gains solace in "a scene of warmly compassionate humanity": the spirit of her slain son appears as in a nō drama to tell her that he is content in death. In *Military Civilian*, actors in the New National Drama Troupe movingly portrayed the Crushed Jewels, soldiers and civilians together, who died on Attu.[10] Playwright Hōjō Hideji was familiar with military operations, having observed frontline action in China in 1937–1938.

Despite defeats suggesting that worse was to come, scholars and culture warriors continued to argue that warfare made a positive contribution to the advancement of culture. Citizens might die, but culture continues to advance. Ōyama Isao strongly urged this position in mid-1943 during the grief-filled period following the Attu Island slaughter: "War is both the destroyer of culture and its creator. If we hold the first view, and our goal is to advance culture, then we must abhor war. But if we hold the second view, we must say without constraint that we glory in the war."[11] Aside from theoretical statements about the value of war, if the conflict reached the homeland it would be a terrible, blood-soaked event. Starting in mid-summer, the Kabuki-za began to include in its printed programs diagrams showing the location of air raid shelters beneath the theater that could hold 2,400 spectators. Other theaters carried air raid shelter directions in their programs.[12] Even as citizens were warned of air raid dangers, they also were constantly reassured that American planes could never harm Japan.

When in late November the Gilbert Islands' garrison of 4,500 men was annihilated in the space of four days, the *Asahi* newspaper carried a photograph captioned "The heroic image of our marines rushing to their deaths on Tarawa Island" together with a eulogy: "These men, joined with the heroes of Attu, form the soul of our Imperial Military Forces."[13] The *Nippon Times* described mass mourning and citizens vowing to "exert their utmost in crushing the Anglo-American enemy with all their might."[14]

At the end of 1943, the naval base at Rabaul was neutralized and the Imperial Fleet was forced to withdraw to Japan's inner "absolute defense perimeter" (that would not hold). Despite these reverses Japanese were not allowed to imagine the possibility of defeat. When Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku's airplane was ambushed by American fighters, citizens were advised to show greater patriotism. The editorial in the inaugural issue of the new scholarly theater journal *Nihon engeki* (Theater Japan) in October exhorted theater lovers to return to an earlier, optimistic spirit of victory: "During the first half of 1943,

we have faced carnage so bloody that our hearts must surely break. Out of the pathos of Admiral Yamamoto's aerial death[15] and out of the horror of total annihilation on Attu Island, now one hundred million Japanese subjects must pledge to recapture the spirit of our great victories of December 8, 1941."[16] As 1943 drew to a close, the government attempted to counter the declining military and economic situation of the war with a show of strength (Fig. 8.1). The cabinet of Tōjō Hideki organized mass celebrations to welcome heads of state of Japan's allied governments in the Philippines, Burma, Thailand, China, Manchuria, and Free India at a showcase Greater East Asia Conference on November 5 and 6, 1943 (Fig. 8.2).

Playwrights Respond with New Overnight Pickle Plays

Kabuki playwrights did not compose overnight pickle plays illuminating the carnage at Guadalcanal, Attu, Tarawa, or Rabaul. Not Gōda Toku. Not Kawaguchi Matsutarō. The commercial kabuki world shunned these catastrophic events. Instead, kabuki artists approached Japan's military defeats obliquely. In 1943 a number of playwrights set their plays on the home front in an attempt to return to the purity of spirit and resolve that had prevailed in 1941–1942.

One important overnight pickle play was old master Kikuchi Kan's hymn to militaristic self-sacrifice *If to the Sea*, staged at the Meiji-za in April by Ichikawa Ennosuke's troupe and several actresses. At the request of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, the proceeds of the month's run were contributed to the Navy Warship Construction Fund.[17] The play's title, *Umi yukaba* (If to the sea), comes from the first line of a poem in the eighth-century *Man'yōshū* poetry collection. The poem, by Ōtomo no Yakamochi, eulogizes a warrior who shows boundless loyalty to the emperor:

> If to the sea, a water-soaked corpse,
> If to the hills, a corpse covered with grass.
> Let me die beside His Majesty
> Without regret.[18]

The poem was set to a deeply melancholy melody in 1937, and in the war years the song became exceptionally popular.[19] It was the anthem of the Imperial Navy, and naval pilots sang it before flying kamikaze special attack missions. John Dower notes the song was extremely effective wartime propaganda because "the archaic ring of such slogans and lyrics conveyed the impression that collective self-sacrifice was a deep and abiding Japanese tradition," when

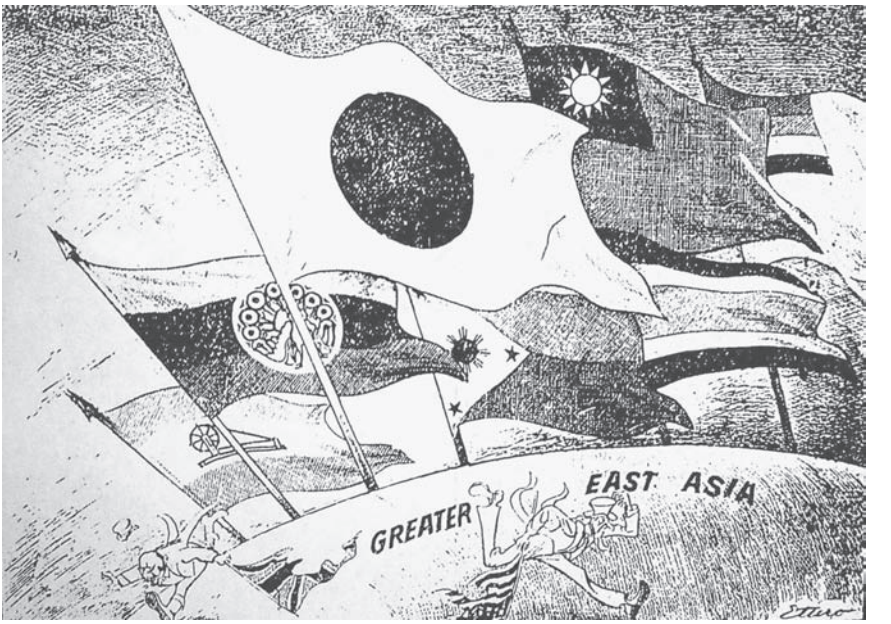


Fig. 8.1. A dominant Rising Sun flag flies triumphant over Greater East Asia, flanked by the national flags of Japan's Asian allies, China, Manchuria, Burma, Thailand, the Philippines, and Independent India. Cartoonist Katō Etsurō draws John Bull and Uncle Sam fleeing in terror from the Asia they once ruled. (From *Nippon Times*, November 7, 1943)

Fig. 8.2. A mass meeting of the "Greater East Asia Citizens' Grand Assembly" in Hibiya Park, November 6, 1943, honoring heads of state from China, Manchuria, Burma, Thailand, the Philippines, and Independent India, no doubt influenced by Nazi Germany's successful deployment of pageantry to arouse mass support. (From Fujiwara Akira, *Zusetsu Shōwa no rekishi, Taiheiyō sensō*, 7)

in fact the idea of universal responsibility to the nation and the emperor was unknown in Japan before the Meiji period.[20]

If to the Sea opens in autumn 1941, when Japanese-American diplomacy is reaching an impasse. It is a sunny morning at the Tokyo home of deceased naval officer Yokota. His widow, Yoshiko (actress Murata Kikuko), is living with her second son, Sōji (Ichikawa Danshirō III), who fought bravely in north China and now is a lieutenant in the army reserve. Her eldest son, Ken'ichi (Ichikawa Ennosuke II), a naval lieutenant, is visiting but must return to active duty that evening.[21] Ken'ichi eagerly accepts his duty to protect the Pacific Ocean in the event of war with America. He banters with his mother, "Won't you find a bride for Sōji while I'm gone?" and he tells Sōji, "Your marriage will benefit the nation and will honor the sacrifices our ancestors made for us. It is your foremost duty to our deceased father."

The next scene takes place in a large meeting room in downtown Tokyo, mid-December 1941. It is Sōji's wedding day, and he has just received his mobilization order. Yoshiko and Sōji's new bride, Michiko (actress Tanoue Toshiko), accept his departure "as a Japanese woman's normal sacrifice." Wedding guests are in high spirits, talking about Japan's successful attack on Hawai'i, the invasion of Malaya, and raging sea battles in the Pacific. Sōji must report for duty in five days. Yoshiko is allowed a mother's tears: "It is sad to think that Ken'ichi is already in the Pacific and soon Sōji will be sent to the front, too." But perky Michiko will have none of this: "We have started a new family today. You will not be alone." Yoshiko smiles with pleasure. Called to a corner of the room, Yoshiko receives an emergency phone message: Ken'ichi is dead. She stifles her tears and vows to keep silent.

The final scene is the wedding banquet. Guests rise and give welcoming speeches to the bride and groom. Since Ken'ichi is "fighting either in Hawai'i or in Malaya," an older relative congratulates the married couple on Ken'ichi's behalf. The guests depart, leaving Yoshiko with an elderly friend, to whom she confides Ken'ichi's death: "He was a splendid . . . a great man! I don't intend to tell Sōji until he returns from his honeymoon. At least these few days will be joyous." When the newlyweds reenter in street clothes, she greets them: "Have a good trip. Michiko, please take care of Sōji." "With her heart bursting in her breast," Yoshiko sees Sōji and Michiko to the door. She watches them depart with joy in her heart because "she is a naval mother."[22]

If to the Sea is a mother play (*hahamono*) that focuses on the suffering and fortitude of a mother who willingly sacrifices a son for the sake of the nation. The action of the play is minimal and depends on the trite arrival of two unexpected messages. Audiences cared deeply about Yoshiko's grief and sympa-

thized with her forbearance. After all, hundreds of thousands of mothers in Japan were living through the same agonizing experience. Ennosuke and his mixed company of kabuki actors and actresses achieved considerable success in the premiere.

By late 1943, victory in the holy conflict was no longer self-evident, and the early war plays that showed intrepid young warriors doing battle, like *The Final Hours of Commander Kanō* and *Five Army Scouts*, lost their appeal for audiences. *If to the Sea*, by contrast, offered consolation to suffering family members, and it paid tribute to sacrifices that both civilians and military personnel were making to win the war.

Another overnight pickle play, *Pearl Harbor* by Takata Tamotsu, was staged by Ichikawa Ennosuke in Nagoya and Kobe in January.[23] Takata did not appeal to his audiences by re-creating the excitement of the Pearl Harbor bombing success or the victory celebrations that followed. Rather, his play is steeped in a sense of pathos at the evanescence of life, "the sadness of things," *mono no aware*. In act 1 we hear the sound of crack pilots of the Imperial Navy, Wild Eagles (*arawashi*), assiduously rehearsing bombing runs over an unidentified South Pacific island in the autumn of 1941. Local Japanese residents complain to the base commander that the noise of planes climbing and diving, day after day, is unbearable. He asks for their patience.[24]

Time jumps forward to late December. In act 2 the complex emotions that Japanese experienced after the attack are explored. Local residents are now proud that their island contributed to Japan's success at Pearl Harbor. They rush to the airfield commander and ask forgiveness for their previous petty objections. At this point in the play the mood shifts, possibly reflecting the worries of 1943. The scene moves outdoors. The returned pilots enter and stand quietly on a hill, where they look down at the bay that so resembles Pearl Harbor. They speak in subdued voices of friends who have just died. The play concludes on a note of mourning. Several pilots recall the bravery shown by comrade Matsunami when he deliberately self-exploded (*jibaku*) his airplane into American fuel tanks. (His suicide attack preceded by three years mass kamikaze attacks on ships off the Philippines and Okinawa.) Looking up into the sky, one of the pilots hears a bird plaintively calling and remarks: "Ah, do you hear that? Surely it is Matsunami's spirit. He has become a bird."[25]

The Vanguard Theater, too, staged new *ichiyazuke* war plays in 1943 that showed the troupe's public patriotic stance. Two plays were identified as Bureau of Information Citizens' Drama Selections, Kubota Mantarō's *The Wild Goose and the Swallow* at the Meiji-za in March and *Sinking the Unsinkable Battleship* at the Tōkyō Gekijō in December. The former, a Manchurian Inci-

dent play, earned the bureau's favor for its positive portrayal of Japanese settlers who have suffered and given their lives "for the sake of an independent Manchuria."[26] (By this was meant a Manchuria independent from China but incorporated into the Japanese Empire.)

A disagreement over the latter play tested the Vanguard Theater's new close relationship with Shōchiku. In November, the Bureau of Information and the Navy Ministry urged Shōchiku to produce "a timely play (*jikyoku geki*) that will bolster war spirit on the second anniversary of the War of Greater East Asia." To meet this request, Shōchiku asked the Vanguard Troupe to quickly stage Hirata Kōichi's *Sinking the Unsinkable Battleship*, revised by Ōtani Takejirō's trusted playwright Mayama Seika. Troupe members at first declined, but the two sides struck a bargain: the troupe would do the new play if Shōchiku would underwrite an expensive production of *Sukeroku, Flower of Edo*, a classic kabuki comedy the troupe had long wished to stage. In December 1943, the Vanguard Troupe did the two plays on a double bill at the Tōkyō Gekijō.[27] The Vanguard Theater's leading actor and troupe leader, Kawarazaki Chōjūrō IV, proudly described *Sinking the Unsinkable Battleship*'s excellent qualities: "It is a play about a contemporary event that will raise citizens' war morale without doubt and greatly help the war effort at this crucial time."[28] *Sinking the Unsinkable Battleship* was a home front drama, set in the Shōwa Special Armaments Factory in the months before and at the start of the Pacific War. Chief weapons designer Miyahara intends to commit suicide because he has failed to devise a superior aerial bomb for the navy. However, on the third day of the war, Miyahara's "second-rate" bombs easily sink Britain's "unsinkable battleship," *Prince of Wales,* and the battle cruiser *Repulse*. In the final scene, navy officers praise civilian workers who produced the new bombs and thereby made possible the Imperial Navy's imperishable victory. At least one reviewer was disturbed that a factory's failures were the subject of a war play.[29] It appears that troupe members' objections to the play did not run deep for they continued doing the play on tour in Kyushu.

Other new war plays were staged at the request of army and navy information officers. In mid-year, army officials asked Shōchiku's president Ōtani Takejirō to organize appropriate stage activities to celebrate Army Day.[30] Onoe Kikugorō VI agreed for the first time in his career to do radio drama broadcasts, on March 10 to honor Army Day and on May 27 in celebration of Navy Day.[31] In May, at the request of the Navy Ministry, kabuki actors at the Ōsaka Kabuki-za staged portions of *The Navy*, a wildly popular novel by Iwata Toyo'o (pen name, Shishi Bunroku). Also at the behest of the Navy Information Office, the management of four Tokyo theaters agreed to offer topical plays (*ji-*

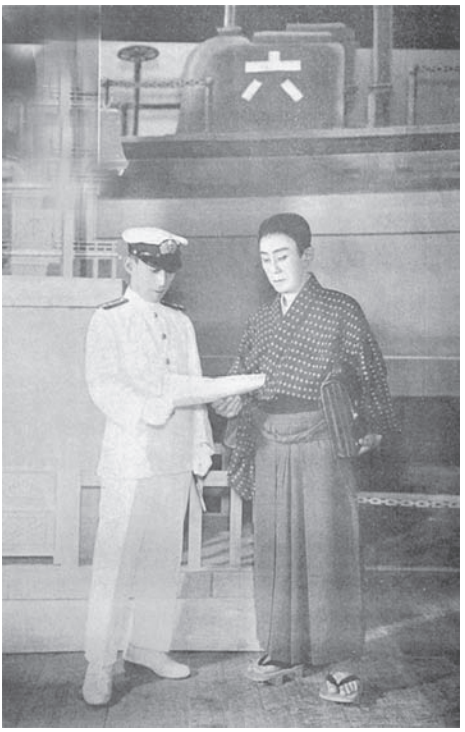


Fig. 8.3. *The Navy*, Kabuki-za, August 1943. Standing before a memorial to the sunken *Submarine No. 6*, new officer Tani Naoto (Ichikawa Chūsha VIII) in dress whites and civilian painter Mutaguchi Takao (Ichikawa Jukai III) both contribute to the Imperial Navy. (From *Engei gahō*, September 1943)

kyoku geki) in honor of Marine Day in August. To fulfill that promise, actors at the Meiji-za and the Kabuki-za mounted separate adaptations of Iwata's *The Navy*. Nakai Yasutaka's dramatization at the Kabuki-za focused on two friends, Tani Naoto and Mutaguchi Takao, who enter the Submarine Academy at Etajima together (Fig. 8.3). In act 1, set in 1940, the young cadets, on a friendship visit to Honolulu, stand in the garden of a wealthy Japanese doctor, where they can gaze down on the American fleet quietly anchored in Pearl Harbor. In act 2, Naoto graduates and becomes a submarine officer, and in act 3 he dies in the attack on Pearl Harbor. Meanwhile, Takao, who has failed his academy examination, has become a skilled artist who is commissioned by the navy to paint commemorative battle scenes. Each has made a contribution to the navy, "one from the inside and one from the outside."[32]

Critic Motoyama Tekishū wrote caustically of the whole project: stages were "filled with battleships, cargo ships, and merchant steamers," but the plays were opportunistic (*binjōteki*) affairs that said little about life at sea. "Do the scripts," he asked, "enhance maritime ideals in any way? Do they invigorate national spirit?"[33] He concluded they did not. Reviewer Nishida Sakimatsu sniped at the poor acting seen at the Kabuki-za: "Kataoka Nizaemon XIII was

excessively winsome" for a drama about the naval academy, Ichikawa Jukai III "chattered on without a care into disaster," and "Bandō Mitsugorō VIII was not up to his role." Referring to the fact that Takao had failed his graduation examination, Nishida quipped, "The acting, too, failed its exam."[34] Such criticism was petty and might be called unpatriotic. Yet in 1943, the Navy Information Office that sponsored the productions allowed these and other negative views to be published.

New Troupes and New Plays in Kansai

Kabuki had rebounded remarkably in Kyoto by 1943: forty-six programs of old and new kabuki plays were staged during the year (compared to four programs in 1940).[35] Several groups of actors had broken away from Shōchiku a few years earlier to form strikingly named independent troupes: New Commando Kabuki, Shock Troop Kabuki, and Public Service Kabuki. In 1943 composition of these troupes was in flux. For example, the program at the Minami-za in January was staged by a joint group, the Public Service Drama–Kansai Kabuki–Grand Combined Troupe. Three plays on the program were new war plays. Gōda Toku wrote and directed *New Year on the Front Lines*, a realistic piece showing soldiers at the front quietly celebrating the season. Its companion piece, *New Year on the Home Front*, uncommonly featured three comic characters, Japan Tarō, Italy Takichi, and Idle-san, who danced to traditional kabuki music played by the Kansai Tokiwazu Association Women's Division. The third new play, Okano Saburō's *New Industrial Road*, advanced the straightforward propaganda theme that Japan's public and private industrial sectors should closely cooperate to win the war. As a reward for toeing the government line, *Industrial Road* received the grand prize for new plays given by the Kyoto Chamber of Commerce and Industry Center for the Study of Economic Law.[36]

In October at the Minami-za, actors from three groups formed the Public Service Drama–Kansai Grand Kabuki–Tōkyō Shinpa Grand Combined Troupe that mounted a program of six plays, two of them new. One was a wartime overnight pickle play by Nakai Yasutaka, *Loyalty and Filial Piety Are One.* A typical mother drama, it sympathetically explored the suffering endured by a farm mother who sacrifices her son for the nation (the same circumstance found in *If to the Sea* and other plays). The play's meaning was summarized poetically as "a tapestry of embellished autumn colors," and more concretely, "the mother who bore him, the mother who raised him, moved by her son's Wild Eagle spirit, sends him joyfully to protect the fatherland." The produc-

tion was staged four times. With the scenery and costumes already paid for, it made good economic sense to tour *Loyalty and Filial Piety* to several theaters.[37] It helped that *Loyalty and Filial Piety* was recommended by the Veterans' Rehabilitation Hospital Relief Program and was a selected participating play of the Movement to Support Military Relief.

Revivals of *All Citizens Are Soldiers* at the Ōsaka Kabuki-za in March and *The Kobe Incident* at the Naka-za in August indicate their themes continued to resonate with Kansai audiences in 1943. *The Kobe Incident* was part of a program Shōchiku publicists called "Hard Fought Decisive Battle Grand Kabuki," linking Gōda Toku's anti-Western drama to the coming showdown with America and Britain. Two minor characters in *The Kobe Incident*, A. B. Mitford and Ernest Satow, had been young officials at the British Legation in the late Tokugawa period and later became renowned Japanologists. Their function in the play was to verify Zenzaburō's ritual suicide. As a consequence, they were odious to patriotic Japanese in the audience. Two specialists in villain roles were assigned to play Mitford and Satow, and we can well imagine the standard kabuki sneers and growls they must have brought to their foreign roles.[38] A reviewer extracted the meaning of the play for the 1943 audience:

> In truth, the events that came to be called the Kobe Incident form a dark blot on the history of Japan. Setting aside the historical facts, Zenzaburō's action quietly impresses today's spectators with its timely spirit. One major point of the play is that Zenzaburō exchanges his life for the good of the nation's foreign relations. And of even greater importance, Zenzaburō joyously offers his life in order to set His Gracious Majesty's heart at ease.

Despite certain moments of botched etiquette in the acting (Zenzaburō should have bowed in the direction of the palace, and he did not), the reviewer said the three-year-old drama was "wholly appropriate to the times."[39]

Why were a number of overnight pickle plays about the war written and staged in 1943, a year with no military victories to celebrate? Paradoxically, Japanese defeats at Guadalcanal and Attu may have stimulated authors to take the war more seriously. As we have seen, the majority of new kabuki war plays in 1943 were home front dramas that showed civilians and soldiers grappling with the requirements and losses of the war. A year before this, Yamamoto Shūji had observed that it was difficult to stage air combat or tank attacks on the kabuki stage, yet these weapons were integral to modern warfare (swords possessed symbolic power, but they could not win battles). Playwrights solved this problem several ways. They focused on the death of a single hero (*Com-*

mander Iizuka), placed the hero behind the battle lines (*Tank Commander Nishizumi*), or set the play in Japan outside the war zone (*If to the Sea*).[40]

Government Guidance

Officials of the Bureau of Information were not satisfied with the number of new plays being produced. In September, the bureau assembled a Conference for Drama in Major Theaters, a Conference for Drama in Small Theaters, and a Conference for New Playwrights to urge more new plays.[41] To commemorate the third anniversary of the War of Greater East Asia in December, twelve professional playwrights, including important kabuki author Gōda Toku, were asked to come up with new plays.[42] In response, leaders of five commercial theater troupes promised to bring out congratulatory plays in December; Mayama Seika, on behalf of kabuki, vowed to write a play for the Kabuki-za.[43] These were not confident actions on the bureau's part. They suggest a disintegrating situation in which playwrights had to be dragooned into providing uplifting plays. Prolongation of the war with America and Britain into another year was not a reason for celebration; it was cause for alarm. These special efforts by the bureau seem not to have produced appreciable results.

Police censors joined officials in the fifth (Culture) division of the Bureau of Information to call for theater artists to self-reflect and repudiate past excesses. In December amateurs and their professional teachers in the Kyoto Traditional Music and Dance Association announced the result of their self-reflection: traditional kabuki dance pieces *Pillow Lion* (Nagauta music), *Kasane* and *Ohan* (Kiyomoto music), and *Oshichi* (Gidayū music) were excessively erotic and would be withdrawn from the repertory. Further, the group disbanded and reformed into three Patriotic Performing Arts Squads dedicated to performing in support of the war.[44]

The Home Ministry now required every theater troupe to register with the police, giving the authorities a powerful form of theater control. In January 1943, the Home Ministry published its first list of 220 registered theater troupes (*kōnin gekidan*) in the Tokyo area. It was a strange list by any measure, mostly small mobile troupes and new propaganda companies. Only a few well-known commercial troupes were on the list and just two were kabuki — the Nakamura Kichiemon Troupe and the Ichimura Uzaemon Troupe. The famous kabuki companies led by Onoe Kikugorō, Matsumoto Kōshirō, and Ichikawa Ennosuke were not on the list, yet they continued to perform in Tokyo.[45] Registration was intended to identify undesirable troupes and deny

them the right to perform. It is unclear how commercial production in the country's 1,724 legitimate theaters was affected by the new requirement.[46]

Government officials were skilled at manipulating arts organizations. On August 2, the Metropolitan Police summoned for a "discussion" the heads of twelve associations of actors, musicians, and dancers affiliated with the League of Performing Arts and Culture with the result that the groups' 20,000 members merged to form one umbrella organization, the Performing Artists' Patriotic Work Battalion. The real purpose of the new organization was announced at its inaugural meeting: "members should voluntarily bring entertainment to villagers and factory workers in order to achieve increased military production."[47] Whereas kabuki actors had dominated the old Japan Actors' Association, in the Patriotic Work Battalion they made up less than 2 percent of the members, and the battalion's head was not a kabuki actor. Kabuki came out of the reorganization a clear loser.

Kabuki Censorship

In preparation for the impending decisive battle and prodded by the worsening war situation, Home Ministry and Bureau of Information officials approached theater more forcefully that before. Japanese government agencies had never been reticent about publicizing the national goals of theater censorship (*ken'etsu*) and guidance (*shidō*). As playwright and quasi-government official Kishida Kunio had argued the previous year, it was natural and normal for theater to support government policies. Now especially, state controls were needed to suppress corrosive individualism based on false Anglo-American values.

On July 3, theater censorship's big gun Terasawa Takanobu, chief of the Performance Section, Censorship Department, Special Higher Police Division, Home Ministry, lectured kabuki producers on their duties during the decisive battle. He couched well-known admonitions in striking images: "Cast off with all of your might crass commercialism in play scripts and schemes for the pursuit of profit" and "Like a hunter aim straight for your target: theater must increase the war strength of all citizens." Referring to commercial kabuki he warned: "I find it alarming that there are still some elements among us today who have not thrown out the old spirit (*kyūseishin*) and the old ways *(kyūhōhō*)." Terasawa urged kabuki playwrights to cooperate with cultural guidance offered by the Bureau of Information because if authors write with a sincere heart and with national policies in mind, the censor will surely not

object to their plays. He also brandished a very large club when he warned: "We will resolutely not allow any theater to exist that harms military power or induces spectators to laziness or idleness. . . . The one and only reason theater exists today is to portray nationalism. A play that exhibits a single unsuitable point of dramatic content, production style, or acting has no place in today's theater and will be eliminated."[48] Terasawa took his campaign against corrupt (*taihaiteki*) kabuki to the whole country in a series of eleven newspaper interviews and articles during July and August. He announced that the only basis for judging a play in 1943 was "whether it exerts good or bad influence in wartime." He also reiterated standard charges against slack *shinpa* plays that did not clearly support the war and against "extreme vulgarity" in young women's musical revue scripts. The censorship office was serious: "every performance must heighten national morale and increase war production."[49]

In 1943, Terasawa "barred from production" 15 percent of the theater scripts submitted to him for censorship. This suggests that Terasawa was banning something like four hundred scripts each year.[50] This was a harsh position, but Japan was facing the most dangerous time in its history. Terasawa banned *The Murdered Courtesan*, scheduled at the Meiji-za, and *Kasane*, a kabuki masterpiece of grotesquery and vengeance planned for the Kabuki-za. One can imagine Terasawa's displeasure with *The Love of Ejima and Ikushima*, in which Lady Ejima of the shogun's court conducts a passionate love affair with kabuki actor Ikushima. He rejected Shōchiku's script out of hand.[51] He prohibited Kawatake Mokuami's gangster play *Benten the Thief* and Hasegawa Shin's wandering gambler play *Tokijirō of Kutsukake* for "offending morality."[52] And he told Kabuki-za producers that Tsubouchi Shōyō's widely admired history play *One Paulownia Leaf* "should be rewritten" before it can be staged.[53] Especially suspect were late Tokugawa and early Meiji period kabuki plays that showed the dread influence of discredited Western naturalism and realism.[54]

Terasawa seemed personally offended by the "immorality" of Takarazuka's all-female performances. Tōhō had assiduously propagandized on behalf of young women's musical theater during the previous three years. Typical was this fervid polemic published in 1940 praising Takarazuka's role in a New World Order:

> Across the reaches of the Pacific and throughout the entire world, the people are embracing a period of fundamental change. . . . A newly awakened German nation has conquered Czechoslovakia, Austria, Poland, Holland, Belgium, and France. . . . Meanwhile in Japan, the leading nation in the East, all citizens are devoted to establishing the New Order that

> will realize the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere ideal based on the great Japanese spirit of Eight Nations under One Roof. In this situation, our Takarazuka, too, fearlessly raises a banner to the future under the motto "A Drama of Patriotism."

Takarazuka had staged many musical plays in support of the imperial legacy, including *The Imperial Realm* and *Picture Scroll of Japanese History*, and plays extolling an expanded southern empire, *Saipan and Palau*, *Pacific Ocean March,* and *The Pacific Ocean*. Tōhō apologists insisted in 1943 that Takarazuka was following government policy: "[Takarazuka] is in complete accord with government policies [and] totally supports the Japanese Spirit. . . . Takarazuka will become a Mecca of the New Japanese Culture Movement!"[55] Issues of Tōhō's monthly journal *Kageki* (Musical Theater) featured "Zuka girls" admiring fighter planes, modeling proper use of gas masks, and acting out military roles.[56] The pleading was in vain. Now Terasawa rejected the very basis of Tōhō's Takarazuka. "An actress who dresses as a man is engaged in unnatural nonsense (*i naru nansensu*) that cannot be permitted," he ruled. In the hope of preserving Shōchiku's young women's musical troupe, Ōtani Takejirō abjectly promised to reform and asked: "Can you tell us what types of plays are good; and what types of performances are bad?"[57] Ōtani was playing innocent, for Terasawa had been saying for several years that exotic, romantic stories harmed the war effort.

As the *Engei gahō* critic Sugamura Susumu noted, Terasawa had hardened his position on kabuki by mid-summer 1943.[58] Terasawa even found problems with Kawaguchi Matsutarō's prize-winning Citizens' Drama *The Final Hours of Commander Kanō*. He required the author to make thirty-six cuts and revisions in the final two scenes.[59] To cite a typical example, Private Satō, a brave soldier who wants to continue fighting alongside his comrades, refuses to be evacuated from the front lines: "I won't do it. I don't care if it is an order, I won't go." But the censor could not allow a play to show an enlisted man disobeying an officer's direct command. Kawaguchi rewrote the line: "Please don't say that. Allow me to stay on the front lines."[60] The change met the censor's objection, but it made Satō's character inconsistent and weakened the play.

Perhaps Ōtani Takejirō was responding to the government's harsher posture when in July he published an article in *Engei gahō* listing reasons that theater was necessary in the present military crisis: 60,000 theater artists provide cultured recreation for one hundred million citizens, plays support government policy, producers follow Home Ministry thematic guidance, and theater uses scarce resources efficiently. And, Ōtani argued, entertainment is more than ever necessary as the nation confronts the tragedy of Attu Island's Crushed Jewels.[61]

The Rhetoric of Kabuki at War

By late 1943, theater writing was expected to be linked rhetorically to war propaganda as well as to convey basic information. Shōchiku laced its ads in *Engekikai* with bombastic war slogans boasting that "Patriotic Theater" was the battle's "Ideological Front Line."[62] As the year came to a close, kabuki critics rose to the rhetorical challenge and adeptly created a bizarre melding of theatrical and military vocabulary. It was not enough that "kabuki must be a bullet"; in the second issue of *Nihon engeki,* Miyake Saburō demanded the "ammunitionizing of kabuki drama" (*kabuki geki no danganka*). In case a reader did not understand his meaning, Miyake explained that he was calling for "decisive battle-ized kabuki drama playmaking" (*kessenka kabuki geki no tsukurikata*).[63] After the war was over, *Engekikai* assistant editor Toita Yasuji excused their wartime statements: "In everything we wrote, the editorial staff followed themes provided by the Bureau of Information. And everything we wrote had to be approved by censorship. The government publicized its thinking regarding theater guidance through us. Our words were not a true expression of the theater world."[64]

Coverage of kabuki in newspapers decreased markedly from 1943 on. By the end of the year, the *Nippon Times* had dropped its long-standing Thursday "Theatrical Notes" column, thereafter carrying only occasional pieces on kabuki.[65] Japanese-language newspapers carried even fewer accounts of kabuki. Terrifying war news pushed other concerns out of mind, and kabuki receded further and further from public consciousness.

Kabuki's Decline in Play Contests

In the third year of the Bureau of Information Citizens' Drama contests, kabuki lost ground to more popular types of theater. When in 1941 and 1942 kabuki plays and productions received more than their share of prizes, leaders of small troupes had protested vehemently. Their new plays, they said, could not compete with classics like *Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy*, and they could not match the production resources of the Kabuki-za. Small troupes needed prize money to survive, while Shōchiku did not. In response, the bureau set up separate prizes in 1943 for productions of "original plays" and for productions of "traditional plays." It was expected that this would help small non-kabuki companies.

The contest began with nine large kabuki troupes participating. But in the end, traditional kabuki productions received no recognition, nor did the altered rules reward small troupes. Judges withheld the grand prize for the best production of an original play and split the second prize of ¥1,000 among three

large commercial troupes, among them the Vanguard Theater. The ¥3,000 grand prize for the best production of a traditional play went to *Mirror Mountain*, staged by the *bunraku* puppet troupe in Osaka. Even more discouraging, after reading through 156 entries in the bureau's original script contest, judges declined to award either the grand prize of ¥2,000 or the second prize of ¥1,000. Five scripts, none of them kabuki, shared a consolation prize of ¥300. In line with government policy of theater decentralization, two of the new playwrights were from Nagoya.[66] Simply stated, the judges, acting as government surrogates, were unimpressed by the overall condition of theater in 1943. The contests revealed a true decline in playwriting quality and the beginning of kabuki's estrangement from government initiatives. In a parallel Citizens' Popular Theater Contest, five small comedy and women's sword drama troupes shared a Bureau of Information consolation prize, but according to the famous playwright Hasegawa Shin, "there were no excellent play scripts deserving the grand prize."[67]

Kabuki Malaise, Kabuki Criticism

It seemed to many that the kabuki world had entered a period of severe malaise, unable to find a suitable posture within wartime society. Writing as a kabuki actor, Vanguard leader Kawarazaki Chōjūrō IV described succinctly kabuki's schizophrenia: "Kabuki is undoubtedly a glorious art, but its plays are too old-fashioned. Naturally kabuki looks terribly distant today. . . . Its content is from a different age. Therefore, today it is important that we regularly stage new plays. We must do this one after the other. . . . However you look at it, the dissatisfaction and scorn shown for kabuki reveals a gaping defect in the art."[68] Those inside the kabuki world could be more critical than the police censor. In the second issue of *Engekikai*, December 1943, critic Yamaguchi Hiroichi harshly panned three kabuki plays running at the Kado-za that the Osaka censor had approved. He fumed that "individual love and hatred" in the extremely popular *Love Letter from the Licensed Quarter* "were not beautiful and not alluring. . . . The longer I watched the more shameful the sight became. In the end I hated it." The play, he chided, reeked of "vanity and emptiness," and it should be purged by the censor (Fig. 8.4). "*Love Letter from the Licensed Quarter* is like a rail excursion today. We can do without it." He objected as well to the elitist tone of *Umbrella*, a dance play staged in honor of the two hundred fiftieth anniversary of the death of the poet Bashō. The complex lyrics "go over the audience's head," and the play's theme is overly philosophical, he sniffed. Even worse, actors in *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*

Fig. 8.4. Government censors excoriated the indolent, self-absorbed lover-heroes of domestic kabuki plays (*sewamono*) for they offered terrible role models for soldiers or sailors at war. Nakamura Ganjirō II last played feckless Fujiya Izaemon in *Love Letter from the Licensed Quarter* in April 1937. The play was wholly banned by 1943. (Author's collection)

showed not one shred of "true samurai behavior."[69] The famously trenchant critic-playwright Oka Onitarō agreed that the acting in this classic drama "lacked any redeeming feature." The worst offender, he said, was the "god of kabuki," Kikugorō VI, "who portrayed the wife of a samurai as if she were a merchant."[70] Since Kikugorō was performing in a Bureau of Information Citizens' Drama participating play selection, it was courageous of Oka to write stringent criticism. Still, Oka's disapproval touched on acting technique and not on theme or content. Oka could argue in his defense that he was urging a better and therefore more effective Citizens' Drama production.

Critics noted that despite contests, enticements, and rewards, most plays on kabuki programs in 1943 were far removed from the war. *The Navy* was the single war play staged at the Kabuki-za during the year.[71] Even an act from *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers,* listed as a Bureau of Information Citizens' Drama selection in June, was called stale and old hat.[72] And of the May program at the Kabuki-za, the *Asahi* newspaper critic wrote: "The Kabuki-za this month is utterly lifeless. . . . The morning program starring Kikugorō has some saving

grace, but the evening program with Kōshirō and Uzaemon is preposterous. . . . Some spectators ignore the plays and come just to see an actor's face or gaze at the Kabuki-za's architecture."[73] A conservative kabuki producer could stick to a certain portion of the traditional repertory confident of gaining censorship approval and financial profit. But these traditional programs of well-known plays easily lapsed into lassitude and dullness.

Motoyama Tekishū attacked kabuki management for "stagnation in planning," writing in the final issue of *Engei gahō* in September 1943. To start with, he said, "kabuki art had become coarsened when stage directing passed into the hands of amateurs some time ago."[74] Then he dusted off the charge that producers chose plays casually and "opportunistically," while only pretending to attend to war needs. Finally, Motoyama railed that current playwriting was abysmal: "plays now at the Meiji-za amount to little more than synopses, and the slight level of skill previously seen at the Kabuki-za has fallen off because, at heart, authors have poor taste."[75]

Actors usually did not get involved in these critical debates (they were doing kabuki eight to ten hours every day), but in 1943, Ichikawa Ennosuke II argued that playwrights and producers wanted to do new plays. But censorship intervened:

> In truth, two new plays were written and offered to me, but it turned out we couldn't do them. . . . It's not that there are no good playwrights today. In the current circumstances the playwright can't help feeling apprehensive: will what I write be approved or not? . . . There is no clear consensus on what constitutes appropriate wartime entertainment. And so playwrights and actors are confused. What we need is firm agreement on the nature of a good play.[76]

In Ennosuke's view, good new plays could be brought to the stage if kabuki artists knew in advance they would be approved. Unfortunately that was not the way the censorship system worked.

As the year moved to its conclusion, Yamamoto Shūji returned to the argument that kabuki had been damaged by Western thought:

> Under the Western philosophy of freedom, kabuki is criticized for its feudal values. The plays that are most strongly opposed by this imported philosophy are history plays based on social obligation (*giri*), which is the highest ideal of the samurai class and important in feudal thought. . . . Realism in acting, imported from abroad, denies both nobility and reason, has no artistic form, and should not even be called an art. . . . This

realism has even tainted scenes praising duty, for example, when we see the mother in *The Village School* weep excessively at her child's death.[77]

Kabuki and Theater for the Masses

If the great stars of kabuki were incorrectly interpreting classics like *The Village School* in elite urban theaters, where were audiences to go for correct kabuki? In prewar theater writing, little was said about the uncounted numbers of small kabuki troupes whose unknown actors traveled in perpetual motion from one minor theater to another throughout the countryside. But in the first issue of *Engekikai*, the journal's editors suggested that minor kabuki troupes showed greater fidelity to correct (*tansei*) kabuki than did star actors of Grand Kabuki: "The Kotobuki-za is a small theater (*shōgekijō*) that mounts kabuki plays every month. Here Kawatake Mokuami's *The Dwarf Pine* is being staged in support of the Soldiers' and Sailors' Relief Campaign. This is an example of a play selected from the classic repertory that suits the present situation and provides correct kabuki dramatic content."[78] The author's praise was fully in line with Prime Minister Tōjō's call to the nation in early 1942 for "healthy entertainment for the masses" (*kenzen taishū goraku*).[79] Now the argument was advanced that theater for the masses was intrinsically more "Japanese" than large-scale commercial or elite theater, and therefore it was better suited to confront the evils of Anglo-American culture.

An accelerated movement away from elite entertainment can be seen in several 1943 government initiatives. The Bureau of Information sponsored Umewaka Rokurō in his fourth program of nō designed for mass audiences on February 14 and 15 at the Teikoku Gekijō. Large crowds responded enthusiastically. And in August, the bureau honored twelve playwrights who had written useful national policy plays for popular troupes during the year.[80] Shōchiku and Tōhō each set up a Light Entertainment Division independent of its Theater Division in order to compete more effectively in the field of popular entertainment. Their declared goal was to "the strengthen the structure of wartime amusements."[81] None of these initiatives helped mainstream kabuki.

Popular troupes gave their audiences a steady diet of up-to-the-minute war plays, whether they were working in commercial theaters or were on tour. As one example, at Shōchiku's small Egawa Gekijō in Asakusa, popular troupes staged thirty-two overnight pickle war plays between 1943 and mid-1945, among them, *Oath to Saipan*, *Heroes of the South Seas*, *Tomorrow's Decisive Battle*, *Victory Song of East Asia,* and *Yamashita: Tiger of Malaya*, topics that kabuki playwrights and producers shied away from.[82] The large New National Drama

Troupe also specialized in up-to-the-minute fighting plays that appealed to popular audiences, from *Shanghai* in 1932 and *Barley and Soldiers* in 1938 to *Military Civilian* in 1943.[83] Kabuki playwrights could not match this outpouring of popular patriotic plays about the war, either in number or in scope.

In Kabuki's Defense

Kabuki also had its passionate defenders. Here are two typical positions taken in support of kabuki in 1943. In the article "Seeing Today's Spirit in Classic Drama," critic Torie Tetsuya argued that classical kabuki theater did not stand at a distant remove from the "spirit of the times" (*jikyokusei*) as some people said. To the contrary, *Kumagai's Battle Camp* and other traditional plays that teach loyalty and forbearance are "classical dramas fully suited to the times."[84] That is, their themes and actions have resonance with wartime values even though the plays are set in the past.

In another article, Miyake Saburō defended kabuki by citing the difference between foreign liberalism and kabuki. In the process he refuted the old charge that kabuki had absorbed Western values: "Up until now, some theater-loving people have been fascinated with British and American theories of theater. They respected only a theater of liberalism and would not look back at the traditions of our national drama. But now a willingness to rediscover the excellence of kabuki drama has sprung up."[85] It was a good debating point to say that kabuki was good because Western liberalism was bad, but this was a less than robust defense of kabuki art.

It is surprising, perhaps, how much kabuki's position had changed within Japanese society in the half dozen years since Japan provoked the China Incident. The qualities of kabuki that had delighted audiences, its opulence, grandeur, and fantastic stories, were increasingly identified as liabilities in wartime. In 1943, Kabuki-za managers did not dare to advertise "Boasting a Gorgeous and Luxurious Face-Showing Production" as they had done during the Manchurian Incident.[86] Nor could Shōchiku producers fill the Kabuki-za stage with two hundred actors as they did so easily in 1937 to celebrate the fall of Nanking. Now was a time of austerity, and most young actors were gone from the stage, serving in the military in far reaches of the empire.

Japan League of Touring Theaters

Because American submarines and aircraft were beginning to cut Japan's surface and air supply lines to the continent, overseas morale tours were becom-

ing hazardous. Just a year before, kabuki troupes of seventy to eighty members had freely traveled to Manchuria and back. The last kabuki troupe to visit China, in mid-July 1943, consisted of just six actors led by young Nakamura Kanzaburō XVII and Nakamura Matagorō II. Perhaps in compensation, kabuki actors increased their domestic tours with the League of Touring Theaters. The Bureau of Information greatly strengthened the league in January 1943, adding to its board of directors influential theater figures Kishida Kunio, Ōtani Takejirō, and Shirai Matsujirō. It upgraded the organization, now named the Japan League of Touring Theaters, by structuring it as an independent foundation (*zaidan hōjin*). The bureau prevailed on Shōchiku, Tōhō, and patriotic industrial groups to pony up ¥270,000 in capitalization to provide the newly expanded league with its own independent budget.[87] It was no longer dependent on government appropriations. The league's earlier stiffness toward kabuki softened somewhat, and various arrangements were made to accommodate kabuki tours.

In July, kabuki actors in Osaka formed the Kansai Branch Touring Theater (Idō Engeki Kansai Shibu), divided into three troupes. Actors toured, mostly in traditional kabuki programs, on their "free days" between Shōchiku's monthly commercial engagements. Even veteran Nakamura Baigyoku III played military bases for five days.[88] In Kyoto, Shōchiku officials organized the Shōchiku Kansai Touring Theater Troupe (Shōchiku Kansai Idō Gekidan) at the urging of the Bureau of Information and Imperial Rule Assistance Association.[89] Needless to say, Shōchiku officials earned high marks with the bureau and the league while its kabuki actors paid the price by working extra duty.

Touring was physically demanding, but it could be exciting and gratifying as well, especially for younger actors. Nakamura Utaemon VI, whom many consider the greatest postwar *onnagata* actor, remembers pleasant incidents as a young man on tour: "I traveled on lots of morale tours to the countryside, often with Kanzaburō, Kōshirō [VIII], Tokizō, and Kichiemon. I have happy memories of our performances for the military. They always gave us gifts. It was delightful receiving presents of rare soap and jelly candy that only the military had in those days."[90] League touring brought live theater, including kabuki, to new audiences of ordinary citizens. And it gave younger actors like Kanzaburō and Utaemon a chance to play leading roles usually monopolized by Shōchiku's aging stars.

Alternatives to Commercial Kabuki

With the nation preparing for the ultimate do-or-die battle of the war, the head of the Bureau of Information's Executive Office (first division) wrote an ominous directive that reached theater workers in July:

> Today, the foremost objective for theater arts must be to encourage men to sweat diligently to fulfill industrial production that will increase military strength. In addition, dramatic content must be suitably artistic and enjoyable. However, in current theater we see that war content is treated superficially and awkwardly. Because theater is for an audience of idlers, the required connections to the war situation are bogus and underhanded. Performances for a leisure class and plays that merely drag in references to the war will not do.[91]

A newspaper report of December 11 tells us that a number of young kabuki actors took to heart the admonition to increase weapons production: "Since autumn, Ichikawa Unosuke II, the son of Bandō Jusaburō, and other young kabuki actors from well-known Osaka acting families have been devoting themselves to extensive consolation tours throughout the central region. But recently they have given up the stage, left their homes in Osaka, and taken jobs in munitions factories in various places to increase war production."[92]

In Kyoto, young kabuki actor Hayashi Toshio pledged to work at the Shimazu Manufacturing Main Plant as an "industrial warrior" (*sangyō senshi*) and not step on a stage until the war was won.[93] In Tokyo, Nagauta musicians and other kabuki performers took factory jobs as well. In all, perhaps fifty kabuki artists decided that, while it was good to give morale performances to encourage others to work harder, it was better to build the planes and guns yourself.[94] We may imagine the young men who quit their stage profession did so primarily from patriotic motives. But doubts about kabuki's future must have arisen in their minds as well. They could see that the luster of Grand Kabuki was being dimmed by the war. And if young actors did not see their future on the stage, kabuki's fate was uncertain.

In the fall and early winter months, the Tōjō administration prepared to "sacrifice the intellectual cream" of Japan's young scholars to fill a drastic shortfall in the army. More troops were desperately needed to shore up the country's crumbling defenses. On October 21, in the outer precincts of Meiji Shrine, 25,000 newly inducted university students paraded en masse before Prime Minister Tōjō (Fig. 8.5). By the end of the year, 30,000 college students,

Fig. 8.5. A commissioned propaganda war painting, *University Students Preparing to Depart for the Front Immediately*, by Shimizu Toshi, 1943, evinces a spirit of enthusiastic optimism. In October 25,000 university students were drafted as a group into military service. In the artist's vision, young students, wrapped in national flags, boldly march forward, arm in arm with comrades already in uniform. (*Catalogue of Japanese War Art Paintings,* GHQ, US Army Forces, Pacific [1947]. Courtesy General Douglas MacArthur Memorial Museum)

previously protected by educational exemptions, were drafted, in the process essentially ending Japanese higher education for the remainder of the war.[95]

A Future for Kabuki?

Several different futures were envisioned for kabuki in the waning months of 1943. Waseda University theater professor Kawatake Shigetoshi offered a plan to save kabuki from the effects of social change. In the inaugural issue of *Nihon engeki,* November 1943, he wrote:

> In the six years that followed the China Incident, our situation has changed with extraordinary speed, equal to a hundred years of changes in our modern period. . . . Therefore, must we not visualize an unprecedented sweeping away of culture? Must we not attempt to create something utterly new?

His solution was revolutionary in its vision and conservative in practice. He proposed that the government should manage kabuki:

> I don't think that new plays should be staged at the Kabuki-za. Let the four main troupes under Kikugorō, Kichiemon, Uzaemon, and Kōshirō devote themselves to the traditional repertory in two-a-day productions during the next two or three years. . . . To start with, we should put our three great theater arts — nō, *bunraku*, and kabuki — under national management (*kokka kanri*). . . . Much of kabuki should be transferred to government management as quickly as possible.

Almost two years before the war ended, Professor Kawatake recognized that standard commercial kabuki was under threat and direct government support (and control) held the best promise of preserving kabuki's unique artistic features. In effect, Kawatake was proposing a National Theater without using that name. Intellectuals had asked the government to establish a Japanese National Theater, following the civilized models of France, Russia, and Germany, since the early years of the Meiji era. As for younger kabuki actors, Kawatake felt they should be formed into study troupes under direct government tutelage, "which is the way it is done in Soviet Russia and Nazi Germany today."

But first, Kawatake warned, those actors who were at the forefront of kabuki innovation, Ennosuke, Jukai, Chōjūrō, and Kan'emon, should rid themselves of undesirable "*shingeki*-ness," that is, give up Western dramatic theories. "If kabuki actors will just once wipe the slate clean" of foreign influences, he concluded optimistically, "the way forward will truly open."[96] Kawatake addressed his appeal to the Education Ministry, Home Ministry, and Bureau of Information. The agencies did not respond.

Another view of kabuki's future was presented every day during December to audiences at the Minami-za in Kyoto by way of a formal stage announcement (*kōjō*):

> Circumstances of the War of Greater East Asia this year arouse an even greater extremity of passion in one hundred million souls on the home front. One wing of our nation's glorious culture, for which we give thanks in this sacred era, is brilliantly exhibited this last month of the year in a felicitous Face-Showing production of East-West Grand Kabuki. I respectfully announce the opening of this month's colorful program of first-rank, highly praised dramas, old and new, from the kabuki world. This wholesome and moral entertainment is selected to encourage the brave fight of one hundred million. We humbly believe patrons will rec-

> ognize that our production's magnificent brilliance, far from being a mere gaudy display, expresses the natural elegance of Japanese culture.[97]

It is clever in a time of austerity to assert that kabuki's "magnificent brilliance" is a "natural" part of Japanese culture. We recognize an actor's guileless plea to be left alone to continue his art and his career undisturbed by the war. But that will not happen.

A third, highly pessimistic, vision of kabuki's future was suggested by veteran theater scholar Kusuyama Masao, who believed that the traditional kabuki repertory was too narrow to advance the "new theater" desired by government officials. Under the skeptical title "Troublesome Kabuki," Kusuyama posed questions that must have embarrassed kabuki's commercial managers. He believed kabuki was flat, tired, and boring because of conservative play selection that had little to do with the continuing war:

> To begin with, aren't the actors worn out? Aren't the spectators bored and staying away from the theater? Doesn't the long war patiently borne for some time now seem without end? In any case, aren't there history plays that Uzaemon can do other than *Moritsuna* and *Sanemori*? Aren't there roles in domestic plays other than the rewritten *Country Samurai* and *Execution Ground* that he can perform?[98] Can't Kikugorō dance something besides *Mirror Lion*, *The Maid of Dōjō Temple*, and *The Demon Claw*? Can't Kikugorō and Kichiemon appear in some history play other than *The Village School*? These constantly repeated pieces are mostly late Meiji era revisions. Because actors do not step one foot outside the nimbus of Dan-Kiku kabuki,[99] today's kabuki programs are circumscribed, narrow, and small.[100]

In other words, two things made "traditional" kabuki unexciting for modern audiences: actors played a limited repertory, and they played only watered-down, Meiji era versions. This selective repertory did not represent the totality of kabuki dramatic and theatrical art. Kusuyama's description of kabuki's dullness in mid-1943 strikes a nerve today. His implied solution, to expand the traditional repertory and go back to original scripts, is persuasive, but it did not address kabuki's wartime situation. Kusuyama had nothing to say about overnight pickle plays or Japan's Sacred War or mounting civilian sacrifices.

Surely and rapidly, the carefree days of kabuki-as-entertainment were coming to an end. The nation was being asked to prepare for the decisive battle that would win or lose the war. On the home front, officials announced additional restrictions and demands, both petty and major, seemingly every day.

Electricity was forbidden for frivolous permanent waves. The first College Student Military Units were mobilized and sent overseas. In preparation for urban disorder, lions and other dangerous animals in the Ueno Zoo were euthanized.[101] Harsh deprivations throughout society led to the question, why should kabuki be exempt? Why should luxurious productions be permitted when imperial subjects are dying in battle and when civilians at home go without food, clothing, cigarettes, gas, and even matches? That question would receive a resolute answer from the government in the coming spring. And it would shake kabuki to the core.

CHAPTER NINE

Kabuki Is a Luxury | 1944

British and American devils.
—Slogan, 1944

Report of Heroic Deaths at Saipan Arouses Japan to Vengeance Pitch.—Slogan, 1944

[America's] barbaric culture must be destroyed.
—Dancer-choreographer Itō Michio, 1944

New Year 1944 presented a discordant double image of theater in Japan. When stores and offices reopened in early January, holiday celebrants flooded into entertainment districts in Tokyo, Osaka, and Kyoto. On the surface, theater had recovered from the Depression years. Citizens craved entertainment. It was wartime and many had extra money to spend. Some seventy-five urban theaters were jam-packed, up to 130 percent capacity regardless of fire laws. Most theaters ran programs daily. In Tokyo, seventeen large theaters in downtown Ginza, Shinbashi, and Nihonbashi offered matinee and evening programs of three or four plays each. In the Asakusa entertainment district, forty-two small theaters served up gaudy programs of women's sword drama, vaudeville, musical shows, domestic comedy, samurai drama, and, occasionally, kabuki for Tokyo's unwashed. The Shōchiku Corporation alone owned fourteen theaters and movie houses in Asakusa.[1]

In the Kansai area, fifty-four kabuki programs were staged during 1944, a remarkable increase over the 1930s. Some months eleven out of Osaka's twelve theaters were showing kabuki. Most theaters there were small and modest, like the Nishijin Gekijō in Kyoto and the Benten-za and Nanbō Gekijō in Osaka. Half were under Shōchiku control, and half were independent or managed by the Tōhō or nonaligned theatrical companies. Kabuki was less formal in Kansai, and actors (and actresses) from several genres often played together. Audiences especially patronized theaters where traveling troupes offered a

constantly changing menu of light entertainment (*kei goraku*) or, as it was also called, entertainment for the masses (*taishū goraku*).

However, these large New Year audiences disguised the fact that commercial theater was about to enter a profoundly troubling period caused by the crushing burdens of the war. The leaders of the war knew, and alert citizens sensed, that Japan's military situation was becoming unglued. In early February, the Tōjō cabinet registered profound shock at "the total annihilation of Japanese forces" in the Marshall Islands in just four days of fighting. As the Foreign Ministry's semi-official newspaper, the *Nippon Times*, said, the total garrison of 6,500 men perished, but only "after launching a final, valiant charge and inflicting staggering losses."[2] The Bureau of Information announced that theaters and movie houses in Tokyo would remain dark for three days to honor the Crushed Jewels.[3]

Under the pressure of these unacceptable losses, newspapers began to name Japan's military "reverses": Guadalcanal, Tulagi, the Gilbert Islands, the Mariana Islands, the Caroline Islands, New Guinea, New Britain, Rabaul, Attu, and, now in 1944, Eniwetok, and Kwajalein in the Marshall Islands. On February 22, the *Asahi* newspaper candidly announced, "The war situation has arrived at our gate," and dared to ask the unaskable question "Will we win or will we lose?" The Americans had breached Japan's so-called Outer Perimeter, the article noted, and then asked, "Will the Tōjō cabinet's Inner Line Defense Tactic (*naisen sakusen*) stop the enemy?"[4] An article the same day in the *Mainichi* newspaper rebuked the government for relying on spiritual strength to defeat American ships and tanks: "Bamboo spears won't do it. Aircraft will. Carriers will."[5] Tōjō ordered the offending papers confiscated.

Most Japanese understood their patriotic duty lay in supporting the imperial state. But was this new public questioning of military policy a sign of undercover resistance to the war? As strange as it may seem, the emperor and his courtiers in the Imperial Household Agency were constantly worried that dissatisfied citizens might revolt against the imperial realm.[6] The Minister of Justice reported to a special Diet committee that the "ideological situation" of the nation was "quite sound and satisfactory. . . . Proper restrictions over thought and vigorous action against thought crimes are quite indispensable for the achievement of the goal of the hallowed war. Fortunately, more than two years since the outbreak of the current war we find the domestic ideological situation quite unruffled and quiet."[7] This statement was far from reassuring. It implied domestic tranquility was not a natural condition but required repressive measures by the Thought Police.

In the first months of 1944, the Tōjō cabinet moved quickly to exert greater control over civilian activities and tamp down the possibility of revolt, through indirect psychological means and direct government edicts. First, the Bureau of Information inaugurated an extensive "hate and fear the enemy" propaganda campaign. Newspapers and magazines cried out in dismay that America, driven by an implacable desire for revenge, intended to exterminate Japan (*Nihon massatsu*): "After our unequaled navy destroyed America's Pacific Fleet in Hawaii with a single blow, the American government immediately appealed to all citizens: 'Never Forget Pearl Harbor.'[8] This slogan was drummed into the consciousness of all citizens, successfully creating in their hearts a deep desire for vengeance against Japan. . . . And now their new slogan is: 'We Must Fear Japan.'"[9] The *Asahi* newspaper advised imperial subjects to kill their children and parents rather than surrender to demonic foreigners: "If by remote chance, the enemy sets foot on our sacred land, rather than be humiliated by filthy barbarians (*shūryo*), we must mutually slay our families to protect the blood of our ancestors. We must martyr ourselves for the imperial land."[10] The propaganda campaign to demonize American theater would reach a fever pitch at the end of the year.

And second, the cabinet issued rule after rule, decree upon decree, through the spring of 1944, each designed to exert further control over domestic society. Many were minor restrictions. Taken together, like the Chinese water torture, they inflicted increasing pain as time passed. Unmarried women between fourteen and twenty-five years were ordered to work in munitions factories. It was forbidden to cultivate nonessential food such as melons. Morning editions of evening newspapers were banned. Homes were ordered fireproofed. Train travel over one hundred kilometers was restricted and first-class, sleeping, and dining cars were abolished. The sugar ration dropped to zero, and the tobacco ration shrank to six cigarettes per day. A Student Labor Order regularized volunteer war work by girl students. The military draft reached eighteen-year-old boys, and primary school children, evacuated to the safety of the countryside, each morning sang, "Annihilate America and England! One, two, three, four!"[11]

Theater too suffered piecemeal restrictions. In January, the Finance Ministry raised the kabuki admission tax to 200 percent, the highest in the world. Hereafter, a ¥5 kabuki ticket would cost the buyer ¥15, with the government taking ¥10.[12] On February 16, the Home Ministry ordered all theater restaurants closed immediately. At a stroke, the Kabuki-za's twelve restaurants, bars, and coffee shops were shut and no longer earned profits for Shōchiku.[13] Backstage the situation was grim as well. Iron was so scarce stage carpenters

straightened nails and reused them. Lack of lumber, paint, and cloth made it hard to build sets or make costumes for new plays.[14] The Kabuki-za's response in January and February was typical: producers chose well-known kabuki plays in order to use stock costumes and scenery.

In January, Ichikawa Ennosuke II did not have enough actors in his company to mount both matinee and evening bills at the Meiji-za. Ennosuke's troupe, joined by Nakamura Kichiemon's brother, Nakamura Tokizō III, had to share the bill with another troupe headed by Ichikawa Jukai III, with Kataoka Nizaemon XIII and Nakamura Kanzaburō XVII as guest actors. A critic scoffed that the casting was haphazard and the acting weak.[15]

Professional actors were used to coping one way or another. In February, when Nakamura Kichiemon I heard that the Marshall Islands were lost, he wrote in his diary that he felt both worry and gratitude that he was an actor: "Truk has fallen. Tokyo is just seven hours away. The capital is tense. We continue performing every day. When we step on stage we forget everything else and become engrossed in the role we are playing. It is something to be thankful for. Offstage or at home, the talk is only of the war."[16] Theaters tried to show their total support of government policy. The day after Kichiemon's diary entry, a reporter for the *Tōkyō* newspaper claimed to have identified a "decisive battle atmosphere" at the Kabuki-za, where "today's dramas constitute a fighting theater and actors' roles are cultural bullets." Backstage, he said, even the *onnagata* actors "look like splendid industrial warriors, except for their mincing walk."[17] Meanwhile, the quite ordinary kabuki program at the Ōsaka Kabuki-za was called "A Crushing Blow by One Hundred Million Souls in the Decisive Battle."[18]

The First and Second Decisive Battle Emergency Decrees

Beginning in late February, the Tōjō cabinet promulgated a series of draconian emergency measures controlling labor, retail trade, finance, manufacturing, and war production as well as most social and cultural activity. The first "Decisive Battle Emergency Decree Guideline," announced on February 25, effectively abolished Grand Kabuki for the remainder of the war. The decree was necessary, the bureau said, "to correct the impermissibly casual attitude [at home]. From now on, the primary front line will be inside Japan."[19] Article 7, Cessation of Luxury Entertainments, ordered "first-class places of entertainment" (*kōkyū kōgyō kanrakujō*) to cease operation. Major theaters, geisha establishments (*geigiya*), houses of assignation (*machiai*), cafes serving liquor, and bars were ordered to close on March 5. The measure's intent was "to put

Fig. 9.1. The dispiriting front of the shuttered Kabuki-za, March 1944. The vertical sign (left) reads: "Temporarily Closed for Business." Three panels (right) carry war slogans: "Air raids are no concern, prepare," "Establish Greater East Asia through the power of war bonds," and "Now is the time: ferociously destroy England and America." (From *Engekikai*, April 1944)

these premises to use in ways beneficial to the war."[20] Three days later, the Bureau of Information provided details: some theaters would be "redistributed" out of congested entertainment districts, types of plays would be adjusted to raise citizens' morale and increase war production, and the theater closings would last one year (Fig. 9.1). The bureau named nineteen first-class theaters that had to go dark, among them eleven large theaters that commonly staged kabuki—in Tokyo the Kabuki-za, Tōkyō Gekijō, Meiji-za, Teikoku Gekijō, Kokusai Gekijō, and Shinbashi Enbujō; in Osaka the Naka-za, Kado-za, and the Ōsaka Kabuki-za; the Minami-za in Kyoto; and the Misono-za in Nagoya.[21] The Takarazuka Music and Dance Academy near Kobe was ordered closed as well; its 150 young women students were formed into work brigades and assigned to factory jobs.[22] In a related action in Osaka, the military drafted twenty-five puppeteers, chanters, and *shamisen* players from the Bunraku Theater Troupe, and the *bunraku* training school was dissolved. *Bunraku* performances continued on a reduced scale.[23]

Subarticle 11 directed displaced entertainers to "find employment in appropriate occupations serving prosecution of the war."[24] Theatrical performers were urged to join music or dance troupes affiliated with the League of Touring Theaters. Finally, subarticle 12 dumped responsibility for implementing theater provisions of the decree onto the Greater Japan Producers' Associa-

tion: "The association will set up by March 2 and administer an Emergency Production Procedures Headquarters to coordinate all theater closings and job terminations."[25] The decree constituted the worst blow suffered by kabuki in a century. Not since 1842, when Tokugawa officials had forced kabuki theaters out of central Edo and into the boondocks of Asakusa, had kabuki faced a more difficult circumstance.

The leading *onnagata* actor in the Vanguard Theater, Kawarazaki Kunitarō V, was in final dress rehearsal at the Tōkyō Gekijō when the theater manager told the cast the theater was closing: "Instead of opening tomorrow, we will abide by the government's policy . . . for it will lead to victory after victory."[26] Nakamura Kichiemon I describes in his diary how he heard about the decree: "February 28: Kabuki-za, third floor, rehearsal for the March production. Finished rehearsing *Kiyomasa at Nijō Castle.* The rehearsal for *The Dragon God of Kasuga* is just over. On the radio we heard the nationwide decree: elite theater (*kōkyū engeki*) is forbidden for one year beginning March 5. Troupe members met in their dressing rooms to discuss contingency plans, then soon returned home."[27] Shōchiku and Tōhō managements in Tokyo immediately closed their theaters. On March 1, a carpenter placed a large sign at the entrance of the Kabuki-za: "Temporarily Closed for Business."[28]

During the month of March, the only major kabuki production in the country was staged at the Hōgaku-za in Tokyo, a *hanamichi*-less second-tier theater not affected by the decree. The cast was from Osaka, and the play was a full version of *The Loyal Retainers* that included the vendetta scene (act 11). Leading actor Ichikawa Jukai III capitalized on his troupe's small size by advertising his appearance in seven major roles. Audiences were sparse. Outside Tokyo, Shōchiku managers opened kabuki productions in four theaters on March 1 but then closed them four days later.[29] Perhaps chairman Shirai Matsujirō was gambling that the government would back down: the productions were rehearsed and paid for, so why not open? As it happened, the government stayed the course, and on March 5 the nineteen theaters named by the bureau ceased operations, supposedly for one year.

Members of Ichikawa Ennosuke's troupe, ejected from the Misono-za, packed their bags, went to Kyushu, and cheered up industrial warriors and wounded veterans for the rest of March.[30] In Osaka, the Kansai Grand Kabuki troupe starring Nakamura Ganjirō II made do with the small, drab Ashibe Gekijō and the even less desirable Yachio Gekijō for the next six months.[31] Other large commercial troupes, the Art Theater led by actress Mizutani Yaeko, the New National Drama Troupe, and two *shinpa* companies lost their

theaters as well.[32] The Vanguard Theater's experience was typical: in April they played in the Shinjuku Shōchiku-za, a third-rate vaudeville house in the Tokyo suburbs.[33]

When the decree's restrictions were applied to 887 luxury restaurants, 2,076 brothels, and 4,344 geisha houses in addition to the score of theaters, the result was massive economic disruption. Entertainment and leisure establishments had catered to 63 million customers who spent ¥250 million the previous year. Despite strong government censorship of the media, a journalist felt free to write in the *Tōkyō* newspaper that these arbitrary closings "must be seen as a shocking waste."[34] The Home Ministry announced in convoluted bureaucratese its rationale for closing the large theaters:

> In consonance with arousing one hundred million citizens for the decisive battle, the Home Ministry called on officials of the Japan Producers' Association to maintain elite performing venues in a state of "battle readiness." The result of a thorough discussion was that, based on the government's decree, nineteen theaters named here have been ordered closed on March 5. . . . It is the government's wish that audiences cultivated at smaller, popular theaters should be undisturbed. In this way, the high morale of spectators will be transmuted into increased war production.[35]

On March 20, the Tōjō cabinet promulgated the second "Decisive Battle Emergency Decree Guideline," which expanded on the first.[36] One provision mandated a time limit of two and one-half hours for kabuki performance and a five-yen ticket cap (seven yen for certain kabuki productions).[37] Another provision ordered a general "reform" of play content. New plays were expected to exalt Japanese Spirit, enhance prosecution of the war by constructing a new organization (*shin chitsujo*) of society, and avoid shallow entertainment or opulence that could distract citizens from their war duties. These were longstanding goals, enunciated many times since the war began. Also, new plays should be "simple and understandable for ordinary audiences," a new goal that implicitly excluded difficult kabuki texts.[38]

Another provision established a Touring Performing Arts Mobilization Headquarters within the Home Ministry to expedite touring by major theater, dance, and music troupes. The League of Touring Theaters continued to be hugely successful, eventually reaching an audience of ten million ordinary citizens. But there was a cost. Primarily because of burnout, at the beginning of 1944 half of the twenty-two member troupes had withdrawn, and only one or two kabuki troupes were actively touring.[39] The two decrees would change that.

Finally, the second decree ordered thirty-six minor live theaters and movie houses razed to create urban firebreaks (nineteen in Tokyo). The closings and demolitions reduced the number of theaters in Tokyo by more than two-thirds; hardly twenty theaters remained open.[40] The second decree was so drastic theater wags called it the "Bad News Measure," punning *hihō sochi*, bad news measure, and *hijō sochi*, emergency measure.[41] Later in the year, 731 movie theaters closed, about 40 percent of the total, because film production had collapsed to a fraction of prewar levels. There were too few films to show.[42]

More Theater Regulations

But this was not all. Additional regulations were set forth to implement the decrees. Tokyo police issued an "Enforcement Guideline for Reforming Theatrical Production" on March 24 that continued the two-and-one-half-hour program limit, ticket price caps, and ban on selling tickets in advance and on reserved seating.[43] On April 1, a revised "Regulation Controlling Theatrical Production," promulgated in February, went into effect. Forty-six detailed articles covered all types of live performance from formal theater (*engeki*) and light entertainment (*engei*) to sideshow spectacles (*mimono*).[44] Its most important provision centralized theater censorship into a single national system.[45] Starting in April, troupes in every prefecture were to send their scripts to the Tokyo office of the Home Ministry for censorship.[46] It was argued that the new system would be more efficient, more consistent, and simpler. Once a play script was approved in Tokyo, it could be performed in any city without further inspection.[47] Police required a production plan as well, so that now the censor could object to a director's interpretation as well as to the script itself.[48]

The regulation ordered the Greater Japan Producers' Association to gather scripts from its members, submit them to the Special Higher Police in the Home Ministry, retrieve the censored scripts, and return them to their members, thus making this organization, headed by Ōtani Takejirō, a full partner in the censorship process.[49] Under the new system, between April and December 1944 the association submitted to the Home Ministry 4,142 play scripts of all genres, of which 3,770 were approved and 348, about 9 percent, banned.[50]

Other provisions forced actors into permanent troupes where their actions could be more easily monitored. No longer could actors freely move from theater to theater and troupe to troupe as they had in the past.[51] Productions by independent actors were forbidden; only a registered "troupe" (*ichiza*) could mount a production. Further, each troupe was required to name a legally "responsible representative." These requirements effectively bypassed Shōchiku

and Tōhō management and, at least in theory, required troupes to exist outside the control of producers and theater owners.[52] After this, commercial kabuki productions were frequently advertised under the name of the leading actor or troupe leader — the Ichikawa Ennosuke Troupe or the Uzaemon-Nizaemon Joint Troupe, for example.[53] The government found it convenient to require each group of kabuki actors to form a self-sufficient "troupe," but in fact only Kikugorō possessed the artistic versatility and depth of supporting actors to provide a full kabuki program. Even stars like Kōshirō and Kichiemon had to bring in outside actors to fill out their troupes.[54]

The Home Ministry announced a revision of the "Enforcement Guideline for Reforming Theatrical Production" that included a provision to license stage directors, ostensibly because some directors were "misinterpreting old and new plays."[55] Jennifer Robertson writes of the new requirement: "It was widely recognized that this prerequisite was a form of thought control (*shisō tōsei*); leftists or Westernized personnel were not welcome to exercise influence in the New Japan."[56] The Japan Dramatists' Association prepared the examination, and establishment writer-directors Kubota Mantarō, Hasegawa Shin, Kaneko Yōbun, Kikuta Kazuo, and Kawatake Shigetoshi questioned the three hundred applicants before awarding two hundred coveted "director licenses." In other words, one hundred directors were forbidden to work.

In Osaka, on March 28, the Municipal Peace Preservation Office expanded on the decrees by placing a "total ban on young women's musical reviews and shows, luxurious kabuki, sarcastic *manzai* and *kōdan,* and sentimental music."[57] The ban extended to vaudeville revues (*rebyū*) and musical shows (*shō*). Responding three days later, Shōchiku management disbanded the Shōchiku Young Women's Musical Troupe (Shōchiku Shōjo Kagekidan) and formed a women's troupe devoted to touring, calling it the Shōchiku Central Women's Performing Arts Volunteer Squad (Shōchiku Geinō Honbu Joshi Teishintai).[58]

A final Tokyo Metropolitan Police theater regulation, "Production Reform Guideline," issued on April 13, elaborated on earlier provisions. Theaters were allowed to stage up to three short performances a day (kabuki theaters stayed with one or two daily performances). Allowance was made for exceptional nō or *bunraku* programs to exceed the two-and-one-half-hour performance time limit. It offered a stern warning that vigilant censorship would "sweep clean all corruption" from live entertainment.[59] The March issue of *Engekikai* warned the theater world: "The decrees are not temporary and changeable: they must be understood to constitute the fundamental path to be followed by arts and culture in the empire."[60]

President Ōtani Takejirō had little choice but to declare that Shōchiku fully supported the theater closings: "It goes without saying that we shall give unqualified cooperation in accordance with instructions of the state."[61] Yet rumors floated that the bureau and military ministries had opposed the closings, believing this would hurt civilian morale.[62] It is certain that Shōchiku and Tōhō strongly lobbied the bureau to relax the decrees. On March 9, Kichiemon, then head of the Greater Japan Actors' Association, met with the inspector general of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police for more than an hour to discuss the future of kabuki performances.[63] On April 1, the bureau announced that six medium-sized theaters would be allowed to reopen in April on condition that they stage only "morale plays" (*ian geki*) for audiences of industrial workers. The reopened theaters were the Meiji-za and Shinbashi Enbujō in Tokyo, the Minami-za in Kyoto, the Misono-za in Nagoya, and two non-kabuki theaters in Osaka.[64]

Engekikai spelled out for its readers in March the government's intention toward kabuki: "expensive elite theater will be abolished," "touring theater will be ever more active," and "performances will continue outside the major city theaters, in tents, in the open, and under any circumstances." These extreme, but hardly unexpected, goals required "producers, leading actors, and audiences to make a fundamental shift in their thinking." Theater leaders must "set aside profit and fame" in order to "bring entertainment to villagers and workers in the countryside."[65] Both fascist rightists and progressive leftists supported theater for ordinary citizens, although from opposite ideological positions.[66]

The strict limit of two and a half hours of performance time was a tremendous blow to kabuki, where leisurely performances could last eight to twelve hours. In July, Miyake Shūtarō, an editor of *Engekikai*, expressed what most theater professionals undoubtedly felt: "Theater is a disaster, lifeless and shrunken, in painful retreat in the wake of the emergency decrees. Classic kabuki, in the most optimistic view, will be uninteresting." Then, perhaps to satisfy government expectations, he cheerfully predicted that if producers carefully shortened long plays, they could squeeze two plays into a program.[67]

Crushing Kabuki

It is easy for our attention to be unduly drawn to the closing of the large theaters because these silent shuttered buildings stood as obvious symbols of Japan's looming collapse. Japanese society, like a hypothermia victim, was closing down its external functions in order to protect the vital core of the

nation's military strength. We must understand that closing the theaters was not an end itself but a means for the government to achieve other goals. It was not wholly clear if the Tōjō administration intended to "close kabuki" or not. Kichiemon noted in a March diary entry that he was ready to accept a complete cessation of kabuki if that was required to save the empire: "For the time being we must quietly await the emperor's command. . . . The war situation has worsened, and time is crucial. For us to cease all entertainment for a time and devote ourselves solely to winning the war carries out our grave responsibility to the nation. Victory or defeat hang in the balance."[68]

The first goal the government achieved at a stroke when it closed the large theaters was that an embarrassing example of luxury and extravagance was removed from public view. Luxury was a centuries-old bugaboo for kabuki. As Kawatake Shigetoshi noted: "Regrettably the decrees still lump kabuki together with houses of prostitution as the two 'places of evil' (*akusho*)."[69] Kabuki actors understood very well that the sumptuous nature of their art was under attack by the decrees. After the war, Onoe Baikō wrote of that time: "In March 1944, in line with the so-called Order Forbidding Luxury (Shashi Kinshi Rei), kabuki drama was branded an extravagant entertainment, and large theaters, beginning with the Kabuki-za, were shut down."[70]

Second, closing large theaters shifted attention to theater for the masses (*taishū engeki*). Cultural commentator Fukuhara Rintarō snidely observed that the closings were no great waste because large theaters staged only "luxury performances." Why stage old plays, he asked rhetorically, since modern audiences don't understand old traditions? Indeed, "we can have theater without art."[71] The lead of another article stated the matter succinctly: "Elite Luxury Entertainment Abolished While Popular Entertainment Districts Burst with Merriment."[72] The activity that was being "forbidden," according to Kichiemon, was "elite theatrical performance," that is, kabuki.[73]

In March, a reporter in Fukuoka hailed a "resurgence of popular (*taishū*) kabuki in Kyushu." "Now small kabuki troupes are playing twenty consecutive nights to full houses" in the same theaters where "Kikugorō or Kōshirō played only four nights." These unknown actors "conveyed all the valor, grief, and happiness of the famous kabuki roles."[74] Theater critic Toita Yasuji found a similar "honesty" in performances by small "popular kabuki" troupes in Tokyo's Asakusa and Shinjuku entertainment districts. In the production of *The Village School* at the Kotobuki-za, an unknown provincial kabuki actor played Genzō with "greater emotion than even Nakamura Ganjirō, the most emotional major performer of the role."[75]

Small, nonelite commercial troupes (kabuki and non-kabuki) were scarcely affected by the two decrees. A review in *Engekikai* in April enthused over seven "splendid productions" running in small theaters in Asakusa as part of the Third National Popular Theater Program.[76] Another article joked maliciously that because "fasting is an excellent cure for illness," the diseased art of elite kabuki will benefit from a strict regime of nonperformance.[77]

Not every urban kabuki production was labeled extravagant or elitist, however. From time to time, the government expected the closed Kabuki-za in Tokyo or Osaka to stage a performance of traditional kabuki plays for visiting dignitaries or members of a special patriotic society or industry group. Also, in Tokyo, scaled-down commercial productions were seen most months at either the unaffected Dai Ichi Gekijō or the reopened Meiji-za or Shinbashi Enbujō. In the Kansai region, the New Commando, Shock Troop, and Combined New and Old Drama troupes moved nimbly into and out of second- and third-line theaters scarcely affected by the theater closings. The Naka-za was allowed to stage "wholesome dramas" after November. Other Kansai theaters gradually or partially reopened without fanfare.[78] As a result, the cutoff of urban kabuki performance was not as complete as Baikō and Shōroku had feared (and the government had intended). Still, police monitored productions to see that they complied with the spirit of austerity demanded by the emergency decrees. The cramped and pinched kabuki of late 1944 was a far cry from the swaggering Grand Kabuki of prewar days.

A third long-term aim achieved by the theater closings was obvious to everyone: elite troupes had no choice but to leave the cities and perform in the countryside. *Nihon engeki* told its readers without equivocation: "Following the emergency decrees, Kikugorō and Kichiemon will no longer perform at all in Tokyo."[79] And indeed, for half a year the two actors were not seen in the capital. Actor Onoe Shōroku II understood the situation: "When the order forbidding luxury was issued and the large theaters were closed, there was nothing else for us to do except tour the countryside and give consolation (*imon*) performances for munitions factory workers."[80] Shōroku was scheduled to rejoin the Kikugorō Troupe at the Shinbashi Enbujō in March, having completed another tour of army duty in China.[81] Instead, the entire troupe left Tokyo and toured almost continuously for the next year. They gave morale performances at the Nagaoka Manufacturing Plant, the Nissan Metal Factory, the Imperial Magnesium Company's Sakada Plant, the Hitachi Factory Assembly Line, and the Tachikawa Army Airfield Detachment. Always lacking food and worn down from constant travel, Onoe Baikō recalled, everyone wanted to play at

military bases because they could eat well there.[82] The Vanguard Theater devoted itself almost exclusively to morale tours. Divided into two groups, actors and actresses played traditional kabuki and modern plays twice and three times a day in north, central, and western Japan for the remaining months of the war.[83] By mid-1944, large kabuki troupes in Kansai had gone on tour led by Ichikawa Jusaburō III (four times), Nakamura Ganjirō II (two times), and Ichikawa Kodayū II (seven times). The actors cut and revised traditional scripts to suit unsophisticated audiences of workers and villagers.[84]

Engekikai dutifully published glowing reports of morale tours. Mizutani Yaeko, leader of the Art Theater and one of the most popular actresses on the stage, spoke happily of her tour in central Japan in March and April: "This is the spring of the decisive battle. It is time to show we possess the beautiful heart of Japan (*Yamato kokoro*)."[85] The Ministry of Munitions awarded Matsumoto Kōshirō VII a certificate of appreciation for having visited so many armaments factories during the last half of 1944.[86] Three months after the decrees went into effect, Haneda Yoshirō was able to report: "The center of gravity of our theater is gradually shifting from the former commercial theater world to touring theater and to radio drama."[87]

Nakamura Kichiemon I was under contract to Shōchiku, but he was also a Ministry of Munitions civilian employee (*gunzoku*) who was expected to give consolation performances in the countryside. During the summer of 1944, he and his troupe traveled constantly, offering some fifty morale performances between April and June, an experience that seems to have confirmed his belief that everything must be subordinated to the national crisis. Writing in his diary in mid-summer 1944, Kichiemon opened his heart: "As long as the war goes on, we must continue to give consolation performances for the military. If our effort can hasten victory even a little, it is our responsibility to continue. We must win, win, win. No discussion, no theorizing will bring victory. From this point of view, Shōchiku is greatly lacking. Everything must be done for the nation. Shōchiku counts for nothing." Kichiemon's favorite play on tour, *Sakai's Drum*, was always received with praise (Fig. 9.2). But if he performed the same play in a commercial theater, he would be open to a charge of elitism. The fact that touring was difficult, especially for older actors, was not publicized. In his diary, Kichiemon confided what could not be said in public: "Every day, every day, we repeat the same consolation performance. I fall into a routine. I am jaded, and without realizing it, I have become sloppy. Finally, my art is putrid. This is an important matter. It worries me more than anything. Day after day, it is a bitter pill to swallow."[88]

Fig. 9.2. *Sakai's Drum* was Nakamura Kichiemon I's favorite touring play. The dogged forbearance of the hero, Sakai, suited both Kichiemon's personality and the ideological stance of the Bureau of Information in 1944–1945. (Author's collection)

Kabuki, Capitalism, and Citizens' Drama

The decrees indirectly supported a fourth government goal as well. When the government commandeered the flagship theaters owned by Shōchiku and Tōhō, it deprived the two wealthy theatrical corporations of significant streams of income. For all practical purposes the imperial state had confiscated these valuable private properties and turned them to state use.[89] As chief theater censor Terasawa Takanobu explained it, the decrees made a clear distinction between large commercial productions (*kōgyō*), which the government was determined to greatly restrict, and free public showings (*kōkai*), which his ministry encouraged.[90] By free public showings, Terasawa meant consolation performances, primarily those of the Japan League of Touring Theaters, functioning outside of commercial control.

In 1940, Iizuka Tomoichirō had argued for state control of major theaters: "The current system of unregulated, profit-making commercial production . . . does not permit the existence of a theater liberated from the profit motive. . . . There is no alternative: we must fundamentally restructure the current

Old Order business model by establishing a state Production Control Corporation to manage theater."[91] Iizuka's dream of eliminating capitalist control over Japanese theater was now partially realized but, perversely, at the cost of withdrawing Japan's most important theaters from theatrical use. The Kitano Gekijō now served as the Ōsaka Navy Building, and the Ōsaka Kabuki-za was renamed the Hall of Increased Military Strength. The Kabuki-za in Tokyo became the Municipal Public Hall, and Tōhō's Nihon Gekijō, or Nichigeki, was converted into a balloon bomb factory. Cadres of young women manufactured 9,700 balloon bombs that were floated across the Pacific Ocean on the jet stream to unnerve residents in the western United States. The Bureau of Information reported excitedly, and erroneously, that Kalispel, Montana, had been successfully bombed: "All America is Terrified: Balloon Bombs Light Numerous Fires, Kill and Wound Five Hundred People."[92] Japan's attempt to drop bombs on American cities would come back to haunt the nation a hundredfold when B-29s began massive bombings of Japanese cities.

The bureau's attempts to rein in Shōchiku and Tōhō echo the government's larger efforts during the war to reduce the power of Japan's huge industrial and financial conglomerates (*zaibatsu*), Mitsubishi, Mitsui, Sumitomo, and others.[93] This aspect of Japan's overall wartime policy closely paralleled structures for state control of social and economic activities in Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany.

In April 1944, Iizuka returned to his attack on commercial kabuki, linking its problems to an "American system" of financial management:

> When Citizens' Drama was established, the revision of play content and reorganization of the production system were to go hand in hand. But the spirit of commercialism that permeates the entire theater system remained unchanged. . . . Our nation's theaters have been managed absolutely according to the American system of commercial theater. Further, our artistic theories have been trampled underfoot by the pursuit of profit. . . . Theatrical production throughout the nation should be managed by a single organization. . . . As we wage the decisive battle for theater, emergency reforms are necessary.[94]

Iizuka freely named commercialism (*shōgyōshugi*) and pursuit of profit (*eiri tsuikyū*) to criticize kabuki's management structure but only occasionally used the word "capitalism" (*shihonshugi*). Those who advocated state control of theatrical production had to tread a fine line between finding fault with capitalism and acknowledging that capitalist ownership was enshrined in the

Meiji constitution. A writer who rejected capitalism outright could expect investigation by the Thought Police.

A think piece in the *Japan Times & Advertiser*, a paper close to the government, showed a way to finesse the seemingly intractable contradiction between capitalism and Japanese spiritual idealism. The author, Uga Makoto, acknowledged that capitalism "has rendered an inestimable contribution to the material progress of the human race" and is a method "to promote mutual well-being and prosperity." But the real end of capitalism "ought to be sought in lessening . . . the wide differences in distribution of wealth among people and to spread the benefits of material civilization in all districts and homes." Some individual capitalists disregard "society's needs" and egotistically strive to increase their personal wealth. The solution lay in Japan's New Order, in which there would be a "coming new capitalism . . . distinguished from the hitherto ruling capitalism of self-interest."[95] Uga did not say how capitalists would be persuaded to forgo personal accumulation of wealth. Elise Tipton makes the telling point that even the Special Higher Police believed that leftist thought was caused by "the growth of capitalism [that] had created a gap between two classes: the rich and the poor." Rather than simply punishing people for holding leftist ideas, police officials thought the government should "remove the sources of thought problems by rectifying the capitalist system."[96]

One of the strongest pieces of evidence that the government was deliberately shutting down commercial kabuki in Japan's urban centers is found in this March 19 dairy entry of Nakamura Kichiemon:

> Just now, Shōchiku has come and asked me to perform in the small Shōchiku-za in Asakusa. But I have no desire to act so soon, so I refused. . . . They wanted me to do a program of two new plays twice a day. Shōchiku officials insisted they were following orders of the Home Ministry and the police. They said not one [traditional] kabuki play is to be staged. . . . At 9:30 this morning, troupe members joined a rally, "Performing Arts in Total War."[97]

In mid-1944, the huge shuttered theaters in Tokyo and Osaka stood as mute evidence of Shōchiku's and Tōhō's helplessness. Despite the companies' deep financial pockets, they could not regain control of their theaters. The popular comedian Furukawa Roppa is said to have remarked at the time: "Surely old Ōtani Takejirō is the person most horrified by the decisive battle emergency decrees. He's been showered with imperial awards and certificates of appreciation. And what good are they now? He must feel like returning them all" (Fig. 9.3).[98]

Fig. 9.3. Ōtani Takejirō, Shōchiku Theatrical Corporation president and kingpin of kabuki in the Tokyo area, was showered with certificates, awards, and medals for his firm support of the Sacred War. Named an adviser to the Bureau of Information, he wears full ceremonial attire for an audience with Emperor Hirohito. (From *Engei gahō*, February 1938)

Alternatives to Commercial Kabuki

Scholars and observers who railed against the evils of commercialized theater suggested various alternatives for kabuki. One of many who urged more noncommercial consolation tours was Haneda Yoshirō, who wrote smugly in *Nihon engeki*:

> Except for two or three large theaters that remain open, all major productions are closed. We can say every theater troupe has now begun to actively tour the countryside and offer consolation performances. Yet, undoubtedly some dregs of the old commercial theater system that preceded the decisive battle decrees have not been fully destroyed. It goes without saying there must be no delay in drastically reforming the structure of theater troupes and artistic standards.[99]

A report in the *Nippon Times* on July 21 touted touring in a mixture of socialist and Third Reich propaganda terminology:

> The nation's dramatic front today is seething with activity. . . . With the closing of the capital's leading playhouses, the center of theatrical activity has shifted to rural theaters and open air performances for factory workers. The drama has become a medium through which strength and joy are imparted to the hard working masses behind the front lines. Not only has the center of dramatic activity shifted to [outer] production centers but the dramatic themes have also undergone new changes. Playwrights concentrate on subjects that will give courage and new stimulus to the nation. Performers pick historical or contemporary works that will vividly bring out the strength of the Japanese people.[100]

In their rush to hail morale performances, some authors seemed to lose touch with reality. Nagata Hideo, the recanted proletarian playwright, imagined "traveling theater squads" performing on the front lines in the midst of enemy fire: "We are asked to form frontline theater troupes — do-or-die traveling theater squads — that will go right up to the battlefront. With shells raining down, the squads will use their vitality and good cheer to encourage officers and men holding the front lines."[101] Nagata's vision of actors dodging shells was a romantic fantasy. Other less hysterical authors proposed concrete steps that could be taken in support of the war. One writer urged "ten-minute plays" that would fit into industrial workers' lunch breaks.[102]

Nihon engeki led off its March issue with ten articles devoted to new theater expectations under the heading "Creating a Theater to Confront the Enemy: Decisive Battle Emergency Decrees Theater Structure." One article distastefully described theater in the month before the decrees went into effect: "Theater must belong to ordinary people. During this ferocious decisive battle we feel all the more keenly this must be so. Yet current productions exist mostly for the benefit of the newly rich, the leisure class, and wastrels. In particular this is true of large urban theaters. . . . Who can deny that this is impermissible?"[103]

In April, Professor Kawatake Shigetoshi resurrected his 1943 suggestion that, "in the current situation, the very best way to preserve correctly the drama and its performing traditions is to place kabuki under national management (*kokka kanri*)." He argued that the war situation required a new form of fighting theater that could not be created by current "vacillations and half-hearted efforts." The government should, he said, fund a national theater and a theater academy, citing the successful examples of state theaters in Nazi Germany and propaganda troupes in Soviet Russia.[104] Kawatake's plea was quixotic: why would the government that had just driven kabuki from major theaters build a state theater to save kabuki?

The next month, Citizens' Drama curmudgeon Iizuka Tomoichirō rebuffed Kawatake's plan. In this time of emergency, he wrote, kabuki's death is not important:

> At this time of the decisive battle, voices have been raised to preserve kabuki. . . . However, the transmitted traditions of precious Edo period architecture, ceramics, weaving, and painting are as important as kabuki, and their sacrifice must be borne for the sake of winning the war. . . . We must deny that today's kabuki qualifies as a "classic" theater when it is compared to conventionalized bugaku and nō or, indeed, even to unrefined *bunraku* puppet theater.[105]

Iizuka's disparagement of kabuki was widely shared by theater artists in *shingeki*, who, "with few exceptions, held only ice-cold feelings toward kabuki plays."[106] Brian Powell aptly sums up the wartime *shingeki* attitude: "kabuki is feudal, has no place in modern Japan, and cannot therefore be allowed to stay as it is."[107]

Unquestionably the most vitriolic critic of kabuki in the *shingeki* world was actor-director Senda Koreya. Senda had been arrested in 1940 with other members of the New Cooperative Theater, but by early 1944 he had so far rehabilitated himself that he was permitted to form a new *shingeki* group, the Actors' Theater (Haiyū-za), that spring.[108] After the war, Senda and the Actors' Theater strongly promoted Bertolt Brecht's theories of epic theater. One might think kabuki's conventionalized acting would have been acceptable to a follower of Brecht, but Senda reviled kabuki, saying it blocked *shingeki*'s growth.

> That thing called kabuki is a stupid kind of theater, a twisted flower forced to bloom in a patch far removed from centers of world theatrical culture. Because it was oppressed during centuries of feudal isolation, kabuki developed along the wrong path into a grossly deformed, evil, freak show. . . . In short, kabuki is nothing more than an example of diseased theater that should be placed on exhibit in a museum.[109]

Perhaps Iizuka did not, in fact, hate kabuki, as Senda seems to have done. In any case Iizuka, responding to Kawatake's proposal, reluctantly laid out six conditions for kabuki's preservation:

> Establish a government agency to investigate and guide kabuki.
> Determine a list of kabuki plays deserving preservation and revision.
> Identify appropriate kabuki acting traditions deserving preservation.
> Give concrete guidance for managing and directing kabuki production.

Designate certain theaters solely or primarily for kabuki.
Establish an agency to train actors and refine acting art.[110]

These six "conditions" would radically alter the nature of kabuki. It is as if to save kabuki, Iizuka would first destroy it. Total government control of a performing art had been achieved in the field of motion pictures in 1939, so Iizuka's ideas were not out of the question. However, the government did not assume responsibility to preserve kabuki in 1944 or 1945.

New Control Agencies

As if to make up for the growing inadequacies in military initiatives and economic production, civilian authorities were hyperactive throughout 1944 forming and reforming associations, committees, and leagues that affected theater. Riding the coattails of the emergency decrees, on April 4, the Greater Japan Actors' Association (Tokyo) and the Kansai Kabuki Actors' Association were subsumed into a new Japan Actors' Association.[111] On April 11, the Home Ministry, Education Ministry, and Bureau of Information swept thirty associations of professional performing artists (all genres except *shingeki*) into a new umbrella group, the Greater Japan Performing Arts Council, "dedicated to the creation of patriotic arts that are wholly national in spirit." The council was led by self-appointed ministry bureaucrats for the remainder of the war. Still more reorganizations followed: the Japan Dramatists' Association reshuffled its leadership, and the Greater Japan Producers' Association restructured itself twice during the year with Kishida Kunio becoming a permanent advisory director.[112] Reshuffling was a clear sign that previous arrangements had not worked. But it was already late in the war, and playing with organizational charts accomplished little.

Kabuki's Practical Response to the Decrees

In the wake of the spring blizzard of decrees and police regulations, many practical theater problems pressed for urgent answers. Audience attendance dropped across the board. One audience member described the depressed theater atmosphere: "The large closed theaters look so lonely after the emergency decrees. Even theaters that remain open have sparse audiences. People no longer even remark on it."[113] Attendance fell to 60 percent of normal according to some estimates.[114] With income reduced, Shōchiku spent less on its kabuki productions and cut actors' salaries.

Desperate to save its business, Shōchiku downsized its kabuki troupes and rescheduled them into four older, smaller, and less attractive minor theaters.[115] Kikugorō, Kichiemon, and Kōshirō were either out of the cities on tour, or they were not interested in playing second-tier urban theaters, so suddenly better roles opened for younger and less important actors. Andō Tsuruo observed that the patchwork kabuki cast at the Shinbashi Enbujō in May reminded him of a scruffy traveling troupe: one actor failed to follow the rhythm of the Takemoto *shamisen* music, one drew jeers of "little fool," and still another stood around "as if pining for the Kabuki-za's grand stage."[116] In Osaka the situation was more stable. Most of Kansai's smaller kabuki troupes continued to play in minor theaters as they always had done, unaffected by the decrees.

Many writers commented on the rudeness of spectators coming to kabuki for the first time. Since theaters were now forbidden to sell reserved seats, groups of industrial warriors (*sangyō senshi*), innocent of theater etiquette, ran through lobbies and leapt from row to row to grab the best seats.[117] We might expect that Yamamoto Kyūsaburō, the general secretary of the Greater East Asia Performing Arts and Culture League, would welcome kabuki's new egalitarian audience. Instead, he was appalled by the nursing mothers, wailing infants, and inconsiderate men:

> Since heating is not allowed, you can't blame people for keeping on their overcoats and mufflers. But some men don't even remove their hats, and people tramp up and down the aisles throughout the performance. . . . Proper behavior cannot be immediately inculcated, but at least I think spectators should not roam about during Hangan's suicide [in *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*], and ushers should not shout to keep people off the *hanamichi*.[118]

Producers made adjustments in programs. A September editorial criticized producers for trying to squeeze too many plays into programs now limited to two and one-half hours. Important scenes were being cut, resulting in "thin, weak programs" unfit to "serve as bullets to avenge Saipan."[119] On April 1, Shōchiku announced that in order to conserve resources it would stop using the revolving stage and platforms.[120] The bureau told Shōchiku that its usual system of staging six or more plays a day, divided into two programs (*nibusei*), was an unjustified extravagance. So during the last year of the war most Shōchiku theaters changed over to a single program of three or four plays staged twice a day (*nikai kōen*). Older kabuki actors became exhausted playing major roles fifty performances a month, but bureau officials explained, "This way twice as many ordinary citizens are able to see the plays."[121]

Where Are the New Plays?

In the postdecree period, the impulse of writers and producers to place contemporary events on the kabuki stage faltered significantly. Kabuki programs in 1944 contained hardly more than half a dozen new plays. In Osaka, a dance piece like Yoshii Yūsaku's S*nowballs* hardly seemed "new" at all, for it used familiar kabuki dance movements and musical styles. This charming dance at the Kado-za was named a Recommended Kansai Citizens' Drama Participating Play in January.[122] At the Ashibe Gekijō, the Kansai Grand Kabuki Troupe featured a new musical dance play, *Divine Wind*, that May.[123] In October, kabuki actor Ichikawa Jusaburō teamed up with actress Matsuzono Momoko in *The Actress and the Soldier* on a Combined New and Old Drama program at the obscure Shūgaku-za, and in November, the New Commando Kabuki Troupe of Kansai, led by Nakamura Gannosuke I, staged *The Day We Strike America and England* at Tōhō's small Nanpō Gekijō.[124]

Tokyo audiences were limited to three new-history play premieres and one overnight pickle presentation. Uno Nobuo's *Plum Blossoms in Moonlight* treated once again the Akō vendetta, while *The Tale of Regent Hideyoshi, New Version* dramatized sections of Yoshikawa Eiji's novel that glorified Toyotomi Hideyoshi's life.[125] Yoshida Genjirō created a model female warrior figure, Hori no Kata, in *Hōjō Tokimune* for the Vanguard Theater. Because of the emergency decree closing the large theaters, the troupe's April production was shunted to the minor Shōchiku-za in suburban Shinjuku. The troupe's chief *onnagata* actor, Kawarazaki Kunitarō V, played Hori no Kata. In his autobiography Kunitarō draws a direct parallel between Hori no Kata's battle against Mongol invaders in the thirteenth century and women in 1944 who were facing an American invasion of sacred soil:

> I play the role of lady-in-waiting Hori no Kata. Cutting her ties of love, she determines to die, laying a curse on the enemy nation. Her way of thinking has the same spirit as the Women's Volunteer Corps today. The time is the Kamakura era, but Hori no Kata's feelings are not different in the slightest degree from the heart-felt emotions of a woman today. It is a genuine and earnest role that calls for deeply emotional acting.[126]

Nakamura Tetsurō calls *Hōjō Tokimune* a "new-history play of the new Shōwa era," suggesting that the emergent militarism of the Shōwa era stimulated writing new types of history plays.[127] *Ten Thousand Cheers for the South Seas* at the Meiji-za was the only overnight pickle play staged in Tokyo in 1944 (it will be described in Chapter 11).[128] Otherwise producers and stars alike turned

to familiar favorites in the repertory to fill out programs in medium and small urban theaters and on the road. The Onoe Kikugorō Troupe can be cited as a typical example. Kikugorō VI was a great supporter of overnight pickle plays, starring in ten such plays in 1940 alone. But in 1943 he acted in one contemporary play and in 1944 none.[129]

Writing in December, critic Toita Yasuji expressed his disappointment that three "new" plays, staged in support of the "Movement to Increase Soldiers' Relief," contributed almost nothing to help that worthy cause. The plays were inconsequential. Two were revisions of earlier dramas, and only one was set in the present. Minor troupes staged the plays in small theaters, such as the Sakubunkan and the Kotobuki Gekijō.[130] At the end of 1944, mainline kabuki troupes were struggling for existence, so it is not surprising that this minor bureau effort to link theater with military aid did not entice kabuki participation.

Playwriting Contests in Decline

Play contests encouraging new playwriting were collapsing, too. The Bureau of Information withdrew its support from the 1944 Citizens' Drama play contests, passing off their administration to the Greater Japan Performing Arts Council and the Japan Dramatists' Association. Kabuki performances and original scripts were noticeably absent. Bureau officials articulated high expectations for playwrights.

> Goal: The war situation is exceptionally severe, and having entered the decisive battle stage, this autumn every citizen must hold fast to his convictions and fiercely "dash forward" to crush the Anglo-American enemy. It is vital that superior play scripts exhibit exceptional qualities in order for theater to demonstrate its true function and consummate its assigned mission. A Citizens' Drama script, overflowing with originality, must inspire the consolidation of national strength that will achieve a successful conclusion of the Sacred War, foster a generous National Spirit, vigorously increase war potential, and strengthen ever greater unity of the Yamato Spirit. Such an author will be recognized as a man of talent.[131]

Could any play written in any era accomplish this grandiose task? Once again contest rules were revised. Officials divided entries into large theater (*dai gekijō*) and popular (*taishū*) productions. When only four troupes entered the 1944 contest, this division became moot. As in past years, judges did not award a grand prize.[132] The Vanguard Theater's production of Yagi Ryūichirō's *Snow*

Country Man shared second prize with two other troupes. The play ran less than two weeks at the third-tier Shinjuku Daiichi Gekijō.[133]

In *Nihon engeki* in July, professional kabuki playwright Kaneko Yōbun, a former leftist, offered three "rules" for theater artists to face the decisive battle:

1. Promote a spirit of hostility
2. Energetically expand productivity
3. Lead a cheerful, magnanimous life during wartime

The first two rules, Kaneko said, were well known and understood. The third rule touched strongly on the theater's new responsibility to counter citizens' pessimism and exhaustion with "bright and cheerful" entertainment.[134] How well were playwrights doing at this stage in the war? Had the contests and monetary prizes offered in 1941, 1942, and 1943 produced new, worthwhile plays? Perhaps a dozen good kabuki plays and productions had been stimulated by the contests. Was this satisfactory? At the end of 1944, the editors of *Engekikai* appeared disillusioned: "Since the Soldiers' and Sailors' Relief Movement began last month, many participating plays have been staged to whip up fighting spirit. However, among them quite a few turned out to be slapdash pieces of perfunctory sermonizing. Or, touted as powerful dramas, they descended into complete mawkishness and never recovered. These plays are useless to the military effort."[135] A group of prominent theater critics who gathered to discuss "Today's Theater" in August 1944 agreed that the current crop of new plays was insufficient. Takada Tamotsu admitted: "I go to plays less often now. And my not-going is a criticism." The writers allowed themselves to be surprisingly pessimistic, seeing no hope for improvement in the midst of the war crisis: "We must wait for Japan to win the war. Until young writers return home from the battle front, there is nothing we can do." It cannot be denied, they said, that not many good new playwrights have appeared.[136]

Taking a different tack, army and navy officials tried explicity to publicize their need for plays supporting the war. Military information officers invited seven playwrights and critics to write in *Nihon engeki* on the topic, what is a good war play? One participant, Sekiguchi Jirō, blamed the public for lacking the joyous patriotism seen during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, when bands paraded, columns of school children marched through the streets singing patriotic songs, and mothers turned out in such numbers troop trains could not depart on time.[137] Takahashi Kenji asserted that a war play was a war play only if it "portrays the facts of life of a soldier on the battlefield." It is impermissible, he lectured, for audiences to be bystanders to a distant battle. His earnest hope was that "all plays today should be war plays."[138] According

to Citizens' Drama founder Iizuka Tomoichirō, a poetic drama may emerge after victory, but now war themes must take precedence over artistic qualities or philosophic content.[139] Kikuta Kazuo, a prolific writer of war plays, trotted out a list of patriotic qualities he hoped to include in future writing: "I must write battle scenes that are honorable, and I must depict modern soldiers who exemplify Japanese, not foreign, humankind. A death in battle must be like my own death. A frontline assault must be like an attack on our homeland. My writing must pierce into the hearts of American and British enemies like the tip of a lance."[140] The authors' suggestions struck the right tone of modesty coupled with determination to serve the war. These articles seem to have been desperate attempts to improve an impossible situation.

Further Military Disasters

The course of the war turned dramatically worse for Japan from the middle of 1944. On June 16, formations of American B-29 bombers reached Kyushu Island for the first time, inaugurating the bombing of the Japanese home islands.[141] Three days later, most of the Imperial Navy's carriers and aircraft were destroyed during the American invasion of Saipan, Tinian, and Guam in what American sailors cruelly but accurately dubbed "The Great Marianas Turkey Shoot." On July 4, Imperial General Headquarters announced the army's drive to capture Imphal in India had failed and admitted to 75,000 Japanese casualties. On July 16, the last remnants of the Japanese garrison on Saipan Island "died gloriously one after another, shouting Banzai for His Majesty the Emperor."[142] A Military Press Corps report praised the determination of civilians to resist to the end: "Resolved to retaliate against the enemy's inhuman bombing, the Japanese residents pledged to defend the Island even with their hands."[143] Indeed, 20,000 civilians and 3,000 wounded Japanese soldiers chose to kill themselves rather than surrender to the American fiends (Figs. 9.4a–c). These terrible losses revealed the fatal fallacy of "dashing forward," or *maishin*, no matter the circumstances. Near the end of the war, Japan's leaders also casually sacrificed kabuki art, threw it away in the service of an unachievable victory, as they cast away the lives of their nation's soldiers in futile battles.

On July 18, Prime Minister Tōjō Hideki, chief architect of the War of Greater East Asia, resigned to accept responsibility for the failed direction of the war. Propaganda exhortations reached fever pitch:

Figs. 9.4a–c. Well-known European-style artist Fujita Tsuguji paints a chilling scene of killing and suicide in a government commissioned painting, *Japanese Prefer Death to Dishonor on Saipan Island*, 1944. As specified in wartime propaganda, Fujita portrays civilians and soldiers choosing death with calmness and fortitude. A man puts a rifle to his mouth and uses his toes to pull the trigger, a method of suicide taught in basic training (right inset). Rather than be captured, three women prepare to slash their throats and stomachs (left inset). (USASC Photo #FEC-47-80849. Courtesy General Douglas MacArthur Foundation)

"Reported Heroic Deaths on Saipan Arouse Japan to Vengeance Pitch"
"Nationwide Resolve Kindled to Annihilate Enemy"[144]

The editors of *Engekikai* addressed desperate appeals to theater readers:

"Avenge the Spilled Blood of Our Fallen Comrades on Saipan"
"Transform All Dramatic Performances into Bullets"
"Continue the Kamikaze Special Attack Corps"
"Annihilate American and British Beasts"[145]

During the battle for the Philippines, which raged through the summer and fall of 1944, the Imperial Army and Navy suffered terrible losses of men, ships, and planes.

American control of the sea and air off the Philippines made it dangerous for morale troupes to travel to and from the continent. The New National Drama Troupe, touring in Manchuria in October, found itself nearly trapped. Military audiences in Harbin and Mukden dwindled each day. Japanese army generals hosting the tour knew the noose was tightening. "Go home while you can," they urged Shimada Shōgo, the troupe's actor-manager. Shimada decided to cut short their tour: "It was truly dangerous to be in Manchuria at that time. The Battle of Leyte Gulf was lost and Japan no longer had command of the air. Had our departure been delayed by even two or three days, we could not have returned home."[146] In line with government policy, more than ever kabuki troupes toured factories and military bases on the home islands, where it was still safe to travel (Fig. 9.5).

Government spokesmen assured citizens that successful kamikaze attacks had smashed the American fleet: "The disastrous defeat of the U.S. forces on the waters east of Taiwan and the Philippines . . . is evidence that America cannot invade Japan."[147] In the early years of the war, the occasional pilot had "body smashed" his airplane into an enemy target as an act of individual courage. In 1944, the army and navy assigned thousands of officers and men to Special Attack Corps units dedicated to suicide bombing of American ships (Fig. 9.6). The young, untested pilots flew off with their commander's exhortation ringing in their ears: "No true fighter expects to return safely."[148] These "divine wind" suicide attacks inflicted significant damage on American ships, but they did not slow MacArthur's assault on the Philippines.[149]

Fig. 9.5. Kabuki troupes increased domestic touring in 1944. Four kabuki actors perform an interior scene within a jury-rigged set using minimal props. The banner proclaims: "Welcome: Shōchiku Citizens' Touring Theater Company." (From Mainichi Shinbunsha, *Shashin Shōwa sanjūnen shi*)

Animalistic American Theater

As the battles came closer to the home islands, the Board of Information redoubled its "hate the enemy" campaign. Barak Kushner points out that most Japanese did not know white Americans: "The problem was that those on the home front could not see the face of the enemy. . . . Since the enemy is not yet a visible threat it is difficult to inculcate hatred against him."[150] To overcome this situation, in Iritani's words, "the result was a fanatical propaganda campaign which attempted to inspire hostility toward the enemy and focused on the need to exploit the enemy's weaknesses."[151] In 1943, newspapers had begun to describe American soldiers as animals without human souls, "lusty carnivorous beasts gleefully gloating over the innocent blood of their victims." Laughing American tank drivers, "worse than beasts," singled out wounded Japanese soldiers and crushed them beneath their tank treads. The "demonical Yankee" pilots who routinely bombed hospital ships and strafed survivors

Fig. 9.6. A commissioned propaganda painting, *Special Attack Unit (Suicide) Leaving a Base on the Home Islands—Hitachi Air Field, Ibaragi Prefecture, Honshu*, by Ihara Usaburō. Friends, relatives, and fellow soldiers cheer a departing squadron of kamikaze pilots who are flying to almost certain death. (*Catalogue of Japanese War Art Paintings,* GHQ US Army Forces, Pacific [1947]. Courtesy General Douglas MacArthur Memorial Museum)

thrown into the sea "must be torn to pieces." Especially heinous were American airmen who routinely dropped bright matchbox bombs over Italian cities: when curious children opened the boxes, the ensuing detonations shredded little hands and faces.[152] A second aim of Japanese propaganda was to sow dissension among Allied soldiers and lower their morale (Fig. 9.7).

In November 1944, theater and film journals under Bureau of Information control published seven articles excoriating American performing arts. Three hate-America articles appeared in film magazines: "The Bestiality of Our Enemy, America," "On the Bestiality of American Cinema," and "Their Forty-Year Plan to Exterminate the Nation of Japan."[153] Four articles in the November issues of *Engekikai* and *Nihon engeki* agreed that American commercial theater was barbaric, linking artistic depravity to the animalistic behavior of Americans in battle. Their common theme was that a bestial people can produce only immoral comedies and salacious musical shows. Hatanaka Rōha recycled the old charge that theatrical realism was an Anglo-American

Fig. 9.7. A Japanese propaganda leaflet designed to create friction between Australian and American soldiers. Two Australian soldiers (top) face bursting shells, grave markers, and skulls, while the American soldier (bottom) is in bed with an Australian woman. (From Fujiwara Akira, *Zusetsu Shōwa no rekishi,* 7)

invention based on materialism and unsuited to the spiritual nature of Japanese theater. It should be purged.[154] Nakano Yoshio, a prolific translator of Western literature, contributed "Seeing the Brutal Nature of American Theater." He expressed horror that Eugene O'Neill, in *Mourning Becomes Electra*, promoted immoral Freudian theories to justify patricide and incest. The "frightening nature of American culture" was obvious in a stream of Broadway plays that reeked of unredeemed filth, such as the notoriously lewd *Tobacco Road*. The fact that this depiction of subhuman naturalism ran on Broadway for ten years in the 1930s clearly demonstrated the depravity of American culture. In conclusion, Nakano boasted that present-day Japanese theater "was infinitely superior to theater in America."[155]

Yamamoto Shūji took a different tack. In "Materialistic American Theater," he reminded readers that Admiral Chester Nimitz showed typical American rancor when he sneered, "Japanese are monkeys." In fact, Yamamoto argued, the Japanese samurai embodies enlightened humanism. In the traditional *kyōgen* comedy *The Monkey Quiver*, a samurai lord shows a generous spirit when he spares the life of a dancing monkey. Americans lack humanity because they cherish the false values of materialism. Americans admit they are inhuman and brutal in social protest plays like Sophie Treadwell's *Machinal* and Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine*. In contrast, Japanese theater artists are imbued with pure "Eastern spiritualism."[156] Earlier during the China Incident, *Engei gahō* had used its review of Sidney Kingsley's *Dead End* at the Tsukiji Shōgekijō to indict the American underworld that flourished "in the most advanced democracy in the world, [where] the poor suffer miserably." The message of Kingsley's play was the following: "A gangster lives well, dresses in splendid suits, and carries rolls of hundred dollar bills. If you are poor or a vagrant, your best chance is to become a gangster. America is not the land of milk and honey."[157]

In the most vituperative of the theater articles published in November, internationally known dancer Itō Michio said that American society was viciously barbaric. Itō was the brother of modern drama director Senda Koreya and stage designer Itō Kisaku (also head of the Japan League of Touring Theaters). Itō Michio had become famous in Europe when he danced the lead in W. B. Yeats' *At the Hawk's Well* in the 1916 London premiere. After moving to America in the 1920s, he successfully choreographed and designed Rogers and Hart musicals in Greenwich Village and directed dance extravaganzas at Hollywood Bowl. He was repatriated to Japan in 1942. Having lived in the United States for twenty years, he certainly knew something of the underside of American society, yet his account verges on fantasy. He assured readers that

most Americans show their fundamental animal nature in "their love of the vicious sport of boxing," "mobs who beat, hang, and burn negroes to death," and "violent men who, even now, carry two pistols in the far west." Naturally, such uneducated and bestial people "are limited to making shallow art." Jazz is the only music Americans have created, and it is "mechanical" and "artificial." It reflects "thundering subways and the incessant noise of typewriters and ringing telephones in buildings forty and fifty stories high." Vulgar jazz could never be created by a "cultured people." Further, "American radio and film dramas are cheap melodramas, lacking all art." Movies depict "naked women" and an "American hero who must win at all costs." In sum, "Americans are ignorant of any spirit of sacrifice (*gisei*) or forbearance (*nintai*)," and therefore, "their barbaric culture must be destroyed."[158]

These seven invective-filled theater and film articles did not spontaneously appear in print in the same month. They were commissioned to push the Bureau of Information's official position that the Anglo-American enemy was an inhuman beast who, nonetheless, should not be feared by courageous Japanese. The stance of bureau propagandists was that despite temporary losses, total victory was assured because "with a deep-rooted conviction of our superior culture [we] can crush other people's ideas about the world order and proceed to lead mankind on the right path."[159] Yet, even children knew that Japan was in mortal danger. A fourteen-year-old school girl, writing in her diary on February 28, shows a detailed understanding of Japan's military crisis: "The bad news has arrived that carriers and warships are striking the Mariana Islands, with two hundred airplanes bombing Saipan, Tinian, and Guam. The enemy, coming from the Solomon Islands, has taken the Gilbert and Marshall Islands and now is attacking . . . the northernmost part of our country's Mandated Islands in the Pacific. It's a shock: Tokyo is just five hours away."[160] Japan was stumbling toward collapse, defeat, and humiliation at the end of 1944. Yet its leaders, beginning with Emperor Hirohito, continued to speak only of resisting the demonic enemy until sacred victory was achieved.

Kabuki Criticism — Yet Again

It had been a disastrous year for Japan and for Grand Kabuki. In the year's final months, there seemed to be no end of complaints about kabuki's failings. Some were old charges that had never gone away. In December 1944, *Engekikai* worried that, despite the decrees, commercial kabuki still depended too much on leisure (*yūkan*) and consumer (*shōhi*) audiences.[161] *Engekikai* asked sharp rhetorical questions about the flabby kabuki repertory: why were the same old

lifeless plays being done that were unconnected to Japan's state of war? And why was there no self-criticism in the kabuki world? "How can there be no response when we assert that kabuki is lacking in the necessary spirit (*kihaku*) to crush the American and British devils? How can there be no reply? We earnestly wish for spirit!"[162] Criticism of new plays continued: "We must face the fact that most new plays are opportunistic affairs. Producers choose plays haphazardly, and actors are completely lacking in a serious attitude."[163]

One of the most devastating attacks on kabuki was published in *Engekikai* on October 1944. Novelist Oshima Seijirō slammed Nakamura Kichiemon for playing the villain Mitsuhide in *The Picture Book of Regent Hideyoshi* and the commoner hero in Mokuami's *Valiant Chōbei*. At a time when audiences needed brightness, both plays presented a dark view of human nature. "Kichiemon is famous," Oshima wrote, "for portraying tragic kabuki figures such as Kumagai and Moritsuna . . . characters in whom evil is beautified." But Mitsuhide does not rise to tragic status: having murdered his master Nobunaga and killed his own mother, he is irredeemably evil, and Kichiemon cannot "beautify" his immorality. Conversely in Mokuami's play, Chōbei, a moral man, is treacherously murdered by an evil opponent. This "shallow play" offers no just resolution. Both plays are morally unsuitable, and Kichiemon is at fault for playing in them.[164]

As 1944 came to a close, the editors of *Engekikai* bemoaned the low level to which kabuki acting and playwriting had fallen:

> We can recognize the serious decline in kabuki in the November production of *Kumagai's Battle Camp* at the Shinbashi Enbujō. Perhaps Kōshirō [VIII] is young and perhaps it is a large role, but you can only say his Midaroku is a shocking failure. Kanzaburō [XVII] shows no emotion at all as Yoshitsune, not just because he lacks training. . . . Uzaemon is old, and while he is healthy now, what can he do in the future? It is half a year since Kikugorō has been seen on stage. . . . As for the clumsy new scripts written by today's meager pool of playwrights, they are wasted effort and hopeless. Yet unless actors try these new roles on stage, kabuki will suffer.[165]

Some of this criticism was undoubtedly deserved. Japanese society was imploding, and kabuki was a handy punching bag on which bureaucrats and critics could vent their frustrations. The war was being lost, and kabuki theater could not change that overriding disaster.

On the evening of November 24, 1944, warning sirens signaled to Tokyo

residents the first B-29 bombing raid of their city. On this Thanksgiving eve, American bombs snuffed out the stage lights of their first theater victim, the fatefully named Nanmyō-za, or Southern Light Theater, in the old bookstore district of Kanda in Tokyo. Over the next eight months, falling bombs and fire storms would turn out the lights in hundreds of other theaters as well.

CHAPTER TEN

The Agony Ends | 1945

The Day Approaches When the Elderly and
Women Too Must Offer Themselves
—Newspaper headline, 1945

Sure victory is identical with sure death.
—Cabinet adviser, 1945

If there are no theaters, we can perform outdoors.
—*Bunraku* performer, 1945

The wholesale decline of kabuki theater in the first six months of 1945 was inescapably tied to the shuddering collapse of the Japanese Empire. The individual actor was like a drowning sailor caught in the powerful wake of his sinking ship. Fate would determine if he went under or survived. American soldiers and marines were capturing the last islands in Japan's defense perimeter in preparation for invading Japan itself. The art of kabuki was of small concern to most of the emperor's subjects at this perilous time, and kabuki mattered not at all to the approaching Americans. In January, critic Fujita Tokutarō wrote of his sense of lassitude after the large theaters closed. He felt no inclination to see plays. Now bombs were falling on Tokyo, and people had no time for plays. Further, he wryly observed, "it seems to me the plays are not good." He brushed off common criticisms of kabuki—good *onnagata* are lacking, audiences are inappropriate, truncated scripts (*midori*) are impossible to understand—and ended with this optimistic forecast: "The great actors Danjūrō IX, Kikugorō V, and Sadanji I died [in 1903–1904], but kabuki did not die. In this same way, kabuki's traditions are being carried forward without break today as well."[1] We do not know whether Fujita believed this or was simply following the Bureau of Information policy to write bright and cheerful (*meirō*) articles that would raise morale.

Trumpeting irrelevant issues was another way to take citizens' minds off impending defeat. The final issue of *Engekikai*, closed by government order

in February 1945, carried a meaningless article, "Return from a Trip on the Continent." The important kabuki playwright Hōjō Hideji described his recent goodwill tour of Japan's mainland colonies on behalf of the Japan Dramatists' Association and the Patriotic Society of Writers. He addressed four large conferences: the Greater East Asia Literary Congress in Nanking, the First Decisive Battle Arts and Literature Conference in conjunction with the founding of the Arts and Literature Society of Manchuria, and in Seoul, the Grand Congress of Aroused Theater Artists in celebration of the fifth year of the War of Greater East Asia and the Grand Congress of Outdoor Performing Arts.[2] Despite the hoopla and the grand phrases of mutual support in the war, it is hard to believe Hōjō's presence carried any real significance.

In time, kabuki would play a role, some will say a vital role, in preserving Japanese culture, but that would occur only after the slaughter had ended and the war that justified personal sacrifice was no more. The endgame of the military conflict, as well as the endgame of kabuki in 1945, did not go according to Japanese plans. When American marines began their assault on Iwo Jima, the first bit of rock that was part of the Japanese home islands, on February 19, 1945, kabuki in Tokyo shuddered to a halt. No kabuki troupe performed anywhere in the city the following month. And in April no kabuki troupe attempted to perform in Osaka or Kyoto.[3] During thirty days of brutal bunker-to-bunker fighting on Iwo Jima, the Japanese garrison of 22,000 resisted nearly to the last man (American losses were 23,000 killed or wounded).[4] Every newspaper and magazine in the United States carried the image of six determined marines and sailors raising Old Glory (for the second time) on the top of Mt. Suribachi. As Robert Smith Thompson reminds us, "America, like all Imperial powers dating back to Rome, was ready and willing to trumpet its triumphs to the public."[5]

But what was a glorious victory in America could not be called a "defeat" in Japan. The current prime minister, Koiso Kuniaki, presented Japan's disaster in elegant euphemisms in a March 21 radio address to the nation, "A Path to Solving National Difficulties:" "In the early evening of March 17, every officer and soldier of the imperial garrison on Iwo Jima joined in a final, heroic, 'all-out attack' (*sōkōgeki*) to defend this vital link in our homeland defense perimeter. Thereafter, a situation regretfully arose on this same island whereby our men, by the hands of the enemy, will not return home." The prime minister's solution to the "truth that . . . the enemy is step by step approaching the Japanese home islands" was slogans — "Resolve Now: Every Subject Take the Field" and "We Shall Fight to the Last Man." Finally he admitted that in addition to

"spiritual power" more armaments must be produced to counter "the enemy's three armies, 900 tanks, 800 ships, and thousands of aerial bombs" massed in the Pacific and directed toward Japan's destruction.[6]

These slogans and appeals had no noticeable effect on the emperor's exhausted subjects. On April 3, two days after Americans invaded the prefecture of Okinawa in homeland Japan, the prime minister announced a General Order mobilizing all citizens under the age of sixty-five into the National Volunteer Combat Corps under the direct command of His Majesty the Emperor. Members of the corps were to defend Japan's sacred soil to the last man and woman, the entire population welded into a single irresistible force.[7] The Home Ministry exhorted farmers, laborers, factory hands, and transportation workers to give themselves fully, "enabling the country to win the war by inflicting a crushing blow to the enemy in the battle on the Japanese mainland which is foreseen."[8] It was not explained how unarmed and untrained civilians were to turn back American tanks and airplanes when the emperor's "unconquerable" army and navy had failed.[9]

The Fall of Okinawa and the Endgame

On April 7, Prime Minister Koiso submitted his resignation to the emperor for his failure to prevent the American landings on Okinawa (he had served less than a year). Later that day an elderly admiral, Suzuki Kantarō, formed Japan's last wartime cabinet. In his first news conference, the new prime minister painted an optimistic picture of Japan's military situation: "There is no reason whatever to be pessimistic. We were not defeated in [the] Iwo Jima battle, as the spiritual blow given the enemy in that battle was tremendous. The confidence and fighting spirit shown in that battle clearly show that we will surely come out victorious in this war."[10] A typical newspaper comment, following Bureau of Information guidelines, echoed the prime minister's upbeat interpretation of the Iwo Jima disaster: "If the entire nation acts and fights in the same way as the officers and men of Iwo Jima, the defense of our country will be assured and a path to sure victory opened. Let us follow in the footsteps of the officers and men of Iwo Jima, and victory will be ours."[11] Cabinet adviser Obata Tadayoshi laid out the situation in chilling numbers: "Sure victory is identical with sure death, which means the readiness of every Japanese to lay down his life in defense of his country. If 70 million out of 80 million lay down their lives, 10 million will still remain to win final victory."[12] These were extreme expressions of an extreme philosophy: the nation will live if most Japanese die.

And, of course, theater too must be prepared to die to save the nation. Theater

critic Yamamoto Shūji disdained the French army because it had not fought to protect Paris. He dismissed the argument that French culture was saved by declaring Paris an open city: "I absolutely reject this. . . . True culture is that for which you lay down your life, something whose values you willingly die for. If the French army truly intended to defend French culture, then even though Paris suffered obliteration and misery, through that very means French culture would have shone with radiant splendor."[13] Japanese theater workers, he implied, should also be prepared to give their lives to protect "shining Japanese culture."

The government showed a truer understanding of the situation in its actions. In January, the 200 percent theater admission tax became applicable to all tickets one yen or higher, meaning that all classes of kabuki tickets would be taxed at this confiscatory rate.[14] For all practical purposes, primary and secondary education ceased. In rapid succession, the Ministry of Education closed all schools except a few scientific institutes. Middle-school classes were formed into labor brigades and dispatched to work sites. Primary school boys, too young to work in factories, were formed into military squads and drilled to wield bamboo spears against American tanks. Girls, too, were sent to work in factories and mines. In all, three million school children over the age of ten were assigned to patriotic labor service.[15] City parks and street medians were converted to vegetable gardens (Fig. 10.1).

The Allies celebrated the surrender of Nazi Germany on May 8, 1945. Japan's strongest ally lay in ruins, defeated and divided among four victorious Allies. Japan had received scarcely any specific aid from Germany or Italy in the five years the Tripartite Pact was in existence, but Germany's defeat nonetheless dealt a severe blow to Japanese morale. The empire alone would bear the full weight of Allied military power from now on. Even though the Allies single-mindedly had followed a "Europe first" policy, by spring of 1945 America, England, Australia, and New Zealand had marshaled half a million men, a navy of a thousand ships, and overwhelming air strength in the Pacific region. And soon men and war material would arrive from the European theater of operations to bolster forces already in the Pacific. Official Japanese statements quietly acknowledged Germany's defeat: "Hitler, the supreme leader who guided Nazi Germany's heroic mission to establish a new world order over the past five years, has died in battle, and the Second Great European War has ended with Germany's unconditional defeat." And just as quickly Prime Minister Suzuki dismissed the event as unimportant to Japan. Following an emergency cabinet session, a Bureau of Information spokesman insisted that Japan remained committed to achieving its war aims: "[Germany's defeat] does not alter by one iota the empire's war objectives. His Majesty has decreed by imperial rescript

Fig. 10.1. Residents of downtown Kanda and Nihonbashi districts in Tokyo dig up street medians to make vegetable gardens. (From Mainichi Shinbunsha, ed., *Shashin Shōwa sanjūnen shi*)

that the aims of the Sacred War are to secure and defend the existence of the empire and protect stability in East Asia. In accord with these aims, the empire directly confronts all difficulties that may arise and presses forward by every means to bring the Sacred War to a successful conclusion."[16]

Never was the government's double image of the war more apparent than in mid-1945. On one hand, invincible imperial forces were smashing the enemy and resolutely winning the war. The official claims of Japanese spiritual superiority, constantly repeated, tended to lull citizens at home into a sense of complacency. As late as January 1945, soldiers fighting desperately against the Americans in the Philippines complained: "People back home . . . remain unaware of the seriousness of the war situation."[17] And on the other hand, newspapers in June and July carried black headlines exhorting imperial subjects to fight to the last man and woman and to drive the enemy into the sea. Newspapers printed quite accurate maps of the landing sites in Kyushu where 350,000 American troops were preparing to land.

Under the headline "The Day Approaches When the Elderly and Women Too Must Offer Themselves," a long article importuned citizens to make their own hand grenades to repel the Americans. One should not throw the gre-

nade too quickly, for that gives the enemy time to throw it back.[18] School children should resist the American devils with spiritual power, using judo and other barehanded fighting techniques. A commentator, writing in the *Mainichi* newspaper on July 11, assured citizens that Japan's defeat was impossible: "Germany was defeated because the German army was just the army, whereas in Japan the whole nation constitutes the army."[19] In contrast to the Americans' superior material resources, newspaper headlines appealed to Japanese spiritual strength: "Our Spirit of Hatred for the Enemy Must Increase" and "Unleash the Fighting Strength of One-Hundred-Million-as-One."[20]

From April to June, a huge American invasion force (larger than the invading force at Normandy) attacked and defeated tenacious Japanese defenders on Okinawa, turning the small island chain into a human hell. Okinawa was now under American control. Just as Prime Minister Koiso had claimed the loss of Iwo Jima was a victory, now Prime Minister Suzuki declared that the Okinawan disaster was a great success: "The loss of Okinawa is not a defeat. Outwardly we appear to have suffered a reverse; but inwardly from the spiritual point of view, we have won a victory."[21] The official government posture was that Americans were a soft, spoiled people who could not stomach bloody losses. More American "victories" like Okinawa would force the Allies to sue for peace. Imperial General Headquarters crowed that the Okinawa Garrison Unit inflicted staggering losses on the "enemy": 80,000 bestial Americans had been killed or wounded and 600 ships sunk or put out of action.[22] Front-page news reports listed the names of 66, and then 236, kamikaze pilots who "body crashed" into American ships anchored off Okinawa. The relatively small number of Eagle Deities mentioned in the papers encouraged readers to believe in Japan's final victory.[23]

There were many dead heroes to praise. An army unit on one of Okinawa's small islands distributed hand grenades to local school children, ordering them to "dash amid the enemy position holding hand grenades under their arms." When the children attacked and died as ordered, the Japanese army garrison boarded boats and escaped without casualty! A contemporary newspaper account righteously concluded: "The soldiers who witnessed the heroic death of the children prayed for the peaceful repose of the child-heroes and trebled their confidence in final victory."[24]

Heartening news reached newspaper readers in late July. Prime Minister Suzuki assured citizens that the "so-called Potsdam Declaration" announced by the Allies on July 27 contained "laughably absurd" conditions that he intended to ignore: "It [has] no effect on the established policy of the Japanese Government to prosecute the war to the finish."[25] And the same day, citizens

read the wonderful news that British prime minister Winston Churchill had been voted out of office.[26] President Roosevelt had died in April, and now the British people had sacked Churchill, arch-imperialist and an instigator of the Potsdam joke. Did this not show that the enemy was tiring of the war? Perhaps in the end Japanese Spirit would prevail and defeat the materially superior Anglo-American beasts. But two days later, bureau propagandists declared, "The front line is no more: one hundred million are in combat. Do not fear the swarming flies of enemy aircraft. We resolve to annihilate their bases, officers, and men."[27] And other headlines warned Japanese citizens over and over of ominous events to come: "Fear Decline in Military Strength," "Decisive Battle for Home Islands Looms," "Enemy Moves toward Borneo," "Imperial Forces Devise Furious Counterattack." The mid-summer boast that "All Imperial Forces Proclaim the Glory of Special Attack Units" had about it the chill of desperation.[28]

Theaters and Urban Bombing

In February 1945, thirteen elite theaters had been closed for a year. Shōchiku and Tōhō managers were anxious to regain control of their valuable properties. Kabuki actors in Tokyo, too, were eager to use the marvelous stage facilities of the Kabuki-za once again; no other theater compared to this elegant home of Grand Kabuki. These hopes were smashed when a Bureau of Information spokesman announced on February 1: "The Anti-Luxury Prohibition Is Prolonged Indefinitely" and "New Measure Bans High-Class Entertainment until Victory Is Gained."[29] The shuttered theaters, closed to curb luxury, would remain dark, and Grand Kabuki would not return for the duration of the war. American B-29 bombers were now reaching Osaka and Tokyo, and huge air raids were about to commence that would drive out of the cities theater performers together with most of the civilian population (Fig. 10.2).

Massed flights of 100, 200, and even 400 bombers began to appear over Japan's large cities in the early months of 1945 escorted by fighter planes flying from Iwo Jima. Japanese anti-aircraft defense was largely ineffective. Through early spring, American bombing focused on high-level precision bombing of industrial and military targets, with only moderate results. Then on the night of March 9–10, General Curtis LeMay ordered his pilots to use a new tactic, saturation fire bombing: 335 B-29 bombers dropped incendiary bombs over Tokyo through the night. A quarter of the city, including 230,000 homes, was consumed by raging, uncontrollable firestorms.[30] Night after night, these "terrorist" raids on residential and small-business districts in Tokyo (Fig. 10.3),

Fig. 10.2. A commissioned propaganda painting, *Civilian Air Raid Defense Activity*, by Susuki Makoto, 1944, places heroic fire wardens and women firefighters center stage as if they were fully in control of the minor fires caused by bombing. This romantic view was completely at odds with reality. Uncontrollable fire storms overwhelmed human efforts like these. (USASC Photo #FEC-47-80871. Courtesy General Douglas MacArthur Foundation)

Osaka, and Kobe killed hundreds of thousands of factory workers and civilians, mostly the elderly, women, and children.

Realizing that citizens were helpless against fire bombing of this magnitude, in mid-March the cabinet issued an emergency order for the "swift and complete dispersal" of all "nonessential folk" from Tokyo-Yokohama, Osaka-Kobe, and Nagoya via special trains to the countryside.[31] Nagoya, a medium-sized city, endured thirty-eight air raids, including a mass attack on May 14 in which 440 B-29s took part.[32] Tokyo was bombed 130 times. By April, perhaps eight million urban residents in Japan were homeless. The bombing intensified during the summer as fleets of bombers arrived from Europe. Between March and July, 50 percent of the urban area of the country was destroyed, including half of Japan's 1,500 theater buildings. By July, newspapers were reporting that every day 1,000, even 2,000, American aircraft were attacking cities throughout the country, but "damage on our side was slight" or "no losses were suffered by the Japanese." In fact, six months of aerial bombing caused between

Fig. 10.3. The massive destruction caused by American bombing reduced even the emperor of Japan to human scale. Emperor Hirohito inspects damage caused by the March 9–10 fire bombing of Tokyo. Unsure of the temper of his subjects, the emperor waited nine days before making this unusual foray into his wrecked capital. (From *Miyako shinbun*, March 20, 1945)

200,000 and 500,000 casualties (Fig. 10.4), and an estimated thirteen million people were rendered homeless.[33] Still, as late as August 11, after atomic bombs had leveled Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Russia had declared war, newspapers continued to print the government's spin that "America Digs Her Own Grave." According to government dispatches, "Kyushu is one great fortress" defended by ten million citizens who have constructed "a grand defense against the enemy's invasion."[34]

Kabuki in the War's Finale

A national survey in 1943 had reported that kabuki and other old plays (*kyūgeki*) accounted for just 10 percent of theater production nationwide.[35] In 1945, production of "old plays" collapsed even further. Mainline kabuki actors were like helpless parents, watching their families scatter and stumble in the dark toward an uncertain future. Conditions were so chaotic in bombed-out Tokyo that from March through July, Shōchiku was able to mount just one commercial kabuki program (Onoe Kikugorō VI at the Shinbashi Enbujō in May). No

Fig. 10.4. Several days after the March 9 fire bombing of Tokyo, seventeen-year-old Ishikawa Mikihiko came to Sumida Ward looking for his father, brother, sister, and niece. He has painted his memory of the piles of charred corpses and baked skeletons he encountered. None of his family members survived. (Courtesy Sumida Kyōdō Bunka Shiryōkan)

kabuki productions were seen in Shōchiku's Tokyo theaters in March, April, and June.[36] In Osaka, the usual three or four kabuki productions each month dropped to zero in April and June. Even though Kyoto suffered no bombing, two months went by with no kabuki performances. In the month before Japan surrendered, the only kabuki production in all of Japan was a two-week program given by actors and actresses in Osaka.[37]

Nakamura Shikan VII, a teenager during the war, saw his burgeoning acting career shrink to nothing: in 1942 he acted twenty kabuki roles and in 1945 one role.[38] In Tokyo, on the night of March 10, the former Tsukiji Shōgekijō — the famous *shingeki* theater built by Hijikata Yoshi and Osanai Kaoru in 1924 — was destroyed by bombs, as were the Kokusai Gekijō and the Shōchiku-za in Asakusa. Some two thousand people took shelter in basement areas of the Meiji-za on March 10, and when the structure burned above them, all were killed.

Osaka was heavily bombed in March as well. One night, when Kataoka Nizaemon XIII was playing the villain Mitsuhide in *The Picture Book of Regent Hideyoshi* at the Naka-za, air raid sirens stopped Nizaemon three times in midsentence, forcing actors and audience to move into air raid shelters. And three times the actors recostumed and reapplied their makeup to finish the performance. Finally on March 14 the theater burned in a mass bombing attack, prompting Nizaemon's rueful remark "neither the Naka-za nor Mitsuhide now remain."[39] That night in Osaka the important puppet theater, the Bunraku-za, burned down, as did most theaters where kabuki was seen: the Kado-za, Naniwa-za, Benten-za, Nanbō Gekijō, Ashibe Gekijō, and Matsushima Yachio Gekijō.[40]

Nakamura Utaemon VI writes movingly of his evacuation from Tokyo in April 1945:

> During the air raids we all fled to Hibiya Park, and even with my bad leg, I walked a long way without thinking. Hibiya Park was a living hell, with more wounded arriving as the air raid continued. . . . I can never forget April 15, when six horse carts loaded with all our family possessions . . . were lost in a "sea of fire." I have no regrets about the burned carts. I was able to escape with my life only by fleeing to a water hole made by the fire department. . . . Conditions were terrible, and naturally the energy drained out of kabuki. Much of this period is a blank, a minus. I call it a "time of thinned out kabuki," when the strength of the old system was lost.[41]

The government responded as best it could to the disastrous March theater burnings. The Japan League of Touring Theaters scattered its ten affiliated troupes to small towns and cities far from Tokyo and Osaka. By chance one of its *shingeki* troupes, the Cherry Blossom Squad (Sakuratai), was quartered in Hiroshima on August 6. The immensely popular troupe leader Maruyama Sadao, known as the "Danjūrō of *shingeki*," and others in his fifteen-member troupe were killed by the atomic bomb blast or died of radiation sickness.[42] In response to the destruction of so many theaters, the government permitted all undamaged theaters to reopen. In May, the Home Ministry returned the Ōsaka Kabuki-za to Shōchiku control: it was the only important unscathed legitimate theater in the city. During the summer Nakamura Ganjirō II, Bandō Jusaburō III, and Nakamura Tomijūrō IV joined forces with *shinpa* actors and actresses to mount three short commercial programs at the Ōsaka Kabuki-za.[43]

In Tokyo, on May 23 the Home Ministry announced that Shōchiku could reopen the Kabuki-za (it had been closed for fourteen months). Shōchiku im-

Fig. 10.5. Bombs falling on Tokyo suburbs reduced the Vanguard Troupe's theater, living quarters, movie studio, and rehearsal facilities to smoking rubble and ash. (Courtesy Tsubouchi Memorial Theater Museum of Waseda University)

mediately formed a composite company of actors drawn from the Kikugorō, Kōshirō, and Nizaemon troupes and proposed a consolation program for the benefit of the War Victims' Relief Board to open in June.[44] But the next evening, May 24–25, in the most destructive air raid of the war, flames engulfed the Kabuki-za along with thousands of other buildings.[45] That night all the buildings in the Vanguard theater compound were reduced to ashes (Fig. 10.5). The Shinbashi Enbujō burned as well, a few hours after Kikugorō and troupe members had left the theater.[46] During the run, Kikugorō had impressed spectators deeply when he came before the curtain and said he would happily die on stage, or if the theater burned, he would continue performing in the open air.[47] These were brave promises that Kikugorō could not keep: his home in Tokyo was burned, he left the city, and he did not perform again until the war was over.

Japan and Kabuki Continue the War

Prime Minister Suzuki studded his opening address to the eighty-seventh emergency Diet session, June 9, with raw emotional appeals that signaled the

government's helplessness: "enraged in extremity by the enemy invasion [of Okinawa]," "prayers for His Majesty move one hundred million to tears," "consecrate our total strength in the decisive battle," and "crush to dust the enemy nation's inordinate ambition."[48]

It was critical to put a good face on the deteriorating military situation. Citizens were told that Japan would win with Special Attack suicide tactics. In all, some 9,500 suicide missions of all types were carried out against American ships in 1944–1945.[49] Most were so-called kamikaze attacks flown by pilots of conventional aircraft. Inventors created other Special Attack delivery systems as well. An inspiring article, published one week before surrender, praised new rocket bombs, the Cherry Blossom (*ōka*) and the Sudden Peal of Thunder (*jinrai*), dropped from mother planes to crash into the American fleet. These human bombs (*ningen bakudan*) would assure "our certain victory in the decisive battle for the homeland."[50] About four hundred small, one-way Return to Heaven (*kaiten*) submarines were built and more than a hundred sent on missions. They were in effect human torpedoes piloted by one or two men, and they proved to be criminally ineffective: at the cost of "one hundred and six pilots lost," *kaiten* sank or damaged three American ships off Okinawa and the Philippines.[51] Seventeen- and eighteen-year-old army and navy cadets were trained to pilot small, one-man, plywood torpedo boats (*shinyō*) crammed with explosives. Several thousand small craft were built and hidden in Kyushu and near Tokyo, ready to smash into American ships attempting to invade the homeland.[52] The head of military technology praised these "sure-death and sure-hit" weapons as "characteristic of Japan" and "not to be found either in Europe or . . . the United States." Citizens should rest assured, knowing these "new types of arms which will determine the outcome of the war at a stroke will make their appearance in succession . . . and will annihilate the invading enemy forces without fail in the coming decisive battle."[53] The truly decisive weapon of the war, however, was unleashed by the United States.

War news crammed almost every inch of space in daily newspapers, now reduced to a single sheet of flimsy newsprint (the *Nippon Times* was allowed two sheets). Exhortations to fight to the end filled column after column. Prime Minister Suzuki was asked by a reporter on June 14 to describe the government's "concrete plan for smashing enemy attempts to land on Japan proper." Relying on the "further fighting spirit of the entire people there is an absolute conviction of victory," Suzuki replied. America is so far away it cannot land one million troops immediately: "when the enemy approaches our shores, we will destroy his transports; when he reaches our shores, we will smash him there; and when he lands we will finish him on land."[54] In helpless anger, a

"Society for Bombing America" sponsored a "Bomb America Rally" on July 18 in Hibiya Park.[55] As late as August, military spokesmen wrote with confidence of their plans to crush an invasion force of "ten million Americans" and win the peace.

Kabuki News Disappears

In mid-1945, the kabuki stage was not the place to learn about the nation's latest bloody military defeats. Kabuki playwrights had stopped writing overnight pickle plays about the war. It is not an exaggeration to say that the institution of kabuki was no longer relevant in Japan's final death struggle. The Bureau of Information shut down the last theater monthlies, *Nihon engeki* and *Engekikai*, in January and February (newsprint was in short supply, as were authors and readers). Only three kabuki-related events merited newspaper squibs in 1945, Ennosuke II's consolation tour of navy bases and factories in Kyushu in March, Uzaemon XV's death on May 6 at a mountain spa, and Kichiemon I's outdoor performance in Hibiya Park, July 31. Kikugorō VI's April–May production at the Shinbashi Enbujō, the most important kabuki offering in months, aroused no mention, although Shōchiku ran minuscule ads.[56] At the same time, week after week newspaper ads touted stage productions by a dozen minor theater companies, and ads for movie releases ran almost every day.[57]

Guidelines for Theater from the Ashes

We can understand the government's end-of-the-war policy toward kabuki more clearly if we look at the four large theater articles that were allotted precious newspaper space in 1945. They are not about kabuki (or refer to kabuki negatively). An item on June 26 put a positive spin on the headlong flight of theater troupes from the cities. In an interview, Nakamura Kan'emon II, a star of the Vanguard Theater, called this a positive step toward a bright, selfless, communitarian future. Before the war Kan'emon had been a liberal-progressive, and after the war he joined the Communist Party. Here he shunned his identity as a kabuki star and followed wartime fascist discourse to deliver his anticapitalist message:

> With the dispersal of industry to the rural districts and the evacuation of the people to the country . . . it is only natural that the centers of theatrical culture should move to the rural districts as well. . . . A worldwide revolutionary change in the theatrical world has come, too. The day is

> gone when theatrical engagements are only a business undertaking for the benefit of city people. We have taken a step toward the goal of providing entertainment for the general industrial class. Theater is transforming itself into a government organ and a representative industrial and agricultural organization.[58]

Japanese theater experts were well aware that outdoor performances, regional festivals, folk dances, and mass spectacles accommodating tens and even hundreds of thousands of spectator-participants had contributed importantly to the "nationalization of the masses" in Nazi Germany. Enactments within natural surroundings meshed with "cultic rites" that were promoted by the Nazis to replace Christian ceremonies. The famous singer Lotte Lehmann remarked in 1934 of an outdoor theater deep in the woods in northern Germany, "Within the cathedral of the German forest music [and theater] is transformed into a divine service."[59] In Japan in 1944, outdoor performances were necessary because so many theaters were no longer usable. Officials could connect some open-air enactments with the sacred spaces and gods' pathways of Shinto shrines and nativist racial myths.

The three other articles were upbeat propaganda pieces about enterprising theater artists forging wonderful performances in the crucible of the war. On July 11, the Osaka *bunraku* puppet troupe reported it was heroically regrouping after bombs destroyed its home theater, the Yotsubashi Bunraku-za, in March. Although 90 percent of the troupe's puppet heads, costumes, and *shamisen* instruments were burned, performances were being miraculously revived at the Asahi Kaikan in Osaka. Amateurs had donated puppets and costumes from their personal collections to assure the survival of this precious traditional theater form. *Bunraku* performers and supporters were showing indomitable spirit: "If there are no theaters, we can perform outdoors."[60]

And three weeks before the war's conclusion, a bylined article on nō was spread over an amazing six columns in the *Asahi* newspaper. Under the headline "Scorched Earth Nō: Ecstatic Religious Condition Fosters War Power," the article described a special nō performance presented as a prayer in support of the war:

> The wooden nō stage in the outer precincts of Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo is the only nō stage that remains after recent air raids have burned all others one after the other. . . . Several days ago, the Nō Drama Association staged here a War Victory Supplication nō program as a prayer offering. A small group of seventy or eighty shrine worshipers stood near the

> front garden, now planted in vegetables. As they watched, they indulged to their heart's content recollections of ancient god plays.

The article explained that nō was important during wartime because students of nō singing and dancing develop strong emotional control that is fundamental to resisting the enemy.[61]

In a fourth article, headlined "Camp of Performing Arts Rises from Scorched Earth," kabuki was specifically rejected at the war's end. Speaking on July 29, two weeks before the emperor's surrender,[62] a Bureau of Information spokesman bluntly declared that "kabuki's gorgeous plays" were impossible to perform because costumes, properties, and wigs were mostly burned and, in any case, "a continuation of kabuki in its traditional form would hardly be compatible with the 'decisive battle simplicity' of today."[63] He singled out for praise popular theater artists who were joyfully touring factories, performing outdoors, and giving dramatic readings on the radio. The official urged that "in the coming months small and medium theaters will be rebuilt speedily" so that a theater close to ordinary citizens' hearts — that is, not kabuki — can arise from the ashes of war.[64]

Kabuki during the Bombing

It is often argued that Japan was a beaten nation by mid-1945 and that invasion of the home islands and the atomic bomb were not necessary to bring about Japan's surrender. But surely this is wrong. Despite the destruction of nearly half of the nation's urban areas and the loss of battle after battle in the Pacific, the Japanese cabinet voted again and again to continue the war until the very eve of surrender. Although on July 25 newspapers reported "two thousand enemy aircraft make massive attack," striking Osaka, Okayama, Fukushima, Kobe, Himeji, and Wakayama on a single day, Prime Minister Suzuki confidently asserted that "one hundred million souls facing the enemy with calm assessment" had nothing to fear for "the reciprocal trust [of government and people] forms an impregnable fortress."[65] By August, Imperial General Headquarters had moved some sixty army divisions, totaling 2.3 million officers and men, into defensive positions on Japan's four home islands. Some six thousand airplanes were husbanded against the coming American invasion of Kyushu and the Kanto region.[66] The war continued.

Kabuki's case is instructive. By early 1945, the majority of kabuki playwrights, actors, and supporting artists had been forced to evacuate from

Tokyo and Osaka into the countryside. By midyear, American bombs had burned or destroyed most kabuki theaters. Yet despite everything, here and there actors and managers managed to cobble together kabuki programs. In February, Nakamura Baigyoku III and Bandō Jusaburō III of the Kansai Grand Kabuki Troupe performed Gōda's *"Pear" Special Attack Suicide Squadron* at the Naka-za, one month before the theater was bombed and burned. It was a home front drama, set in a pear orchard facing the sea "somewhere in western Japan," where young kamikaze pilots trained for their final flights. It was also a family drama in which the mother of one of the young suicide pilots visits her son for a last time.[67] *"Pear" Special Attack Suicide Squadron* was kabuki's last overnight pickle play of the war.

Among the handful of theater artists who braved the bombings of Tokyo was Kikuta Kazuo, author of many anti-American, prowar dramatic scripts for Tōhō and Shōchiku. Well connected in the professional theater world, he was a director of the Japan Dramatists' Association. Entries from his diary in 1945 give us a candid glimpse of how a few theater artists survived in Tokyo as their theater world was blown up around them:[68]

> The number of playwrights staying in Tokyo is smaller every day. . . . People are leaving the city without notice and not ten playwrights remain in the city now. . . . In truth, the function of the Japan Dramatists' Association is to protect our members who cannot put food on the table. Large and medium theaters have been shut by the Order Closing Elite Theaters. At this time popular troupes, without spectators, are in decline due to the worsening war situation.

In his diary entry for March 10, the day following the first massive fire bombing of Tokyo, he describes bicycling through rubble-filled streets to Asakusa to see how his *shinpa* play was doing at the small Shōchiku-za. He found the theater had been gutted by fire during the night, and the actors in his cast were nowhere to be found.

In April, Kikuta wrote and directed *Annamese Wedding* at the request of the Bureau of Information, "to uplift the wilting morale of ordinary citizens." The war's end was just months away, yet the censor was enraged that Kikuta had the Vietnamese bride and groom hold hands in the wedding scene. Police warned Kikuta, "the actors must stand at least a meter apart" to protect public order. On the evening of April 22, incendiary bombs dropped by American B-29s torched Kikuta's house, and the following night an air raid interrupted the broadcast of his radio drama *A Night Spent on the Front Lines*. At the first

stage rehearsal of Kikuta's May production, *Chorus of the Southern Wind*, he arrived by foot at the Tōyoko Gekijō, a third-tier theater in suburban Shibuya. He found the building a burned shell: "It was impossible to open the play."

The situation was dire, but the wheels of bureaucracy continued to turn. In Kikuta's words, the Japan Dramatists' Association was "an external organ of the Bureau of Information," and its purpose was "to gain victory in the war." The only board members remaining in Tokyo, President Kubota Mantarō, Ōe Yōtarō, and Kikuta, were expected to go to the association office in the Ginza every day, "to parcel out to our members the bureau's demands for scripts for traveling troupes and theaters." People were apathetic and drained. On August 10, five days before Japan's surrender, "Mr. S," chief of the Theater Section, Culture Division, Bureau of Information, summoned Kikuta to his office: "I'd like you to write a play on any subject you want. Just make sure it isn't gloomy. Even a one-act drama will be all right." On August 14, "S" urgently summoned Kikuta to tell him the emperor would surrender that evening. He urged Kikuta: "Quickly write the play I requested the other day and, though the mails may be slow because of chaotic conditions, send it to me immediately." He gave Kikuta a precious train ticket to Akita Province and urged him to flee Tokyo to avoid being arrested as a war criminal when the Americans arrived. It was a surreal moment. The Bureau of Information was commissioning a play script that would be performed, if ever, when Japan was under enemy occupation.[69]

Final Kabuki Performances of the War

Kikuta was hyperactive and optimistic by nature. A few kabuki actors matched his determination, but most professionals withdrew from theater work in the final cataclysmic months of the war. Typical is Ichikawa Ennosuke II's postwar recollection of this time: "The five years of the Pacific War was a dark period, a time of suffering for performers."[70] Like most others, Ennosuke did not see himself as a participant in the war. Forgotten were his morale performances in Manchuria, flying to China to gather authentic war material, and the many heroic-soldier roles he enacted in war plays. In portraying himself as a victim of the war and dwelling only on the horrors of the war's end, Ennosuke (and others) erased the victorious years, 1931 to 1943, when life was good for kabuki artists because of the war. Of that early period, Powell succinctly notes, "*Kabuki* . . . did very well during the war."[71]

Compared to even one or two years before, theater production in 1945 went into freefall as the structure of urban life disintegrated. Adhering to the terms

of the emergency decrees of 1944, the Greater Japan Producers' Association kept a strict count of the number of scripts it submitted each month to the Home Ministry for censorship:

September 1944	857
December 1944	354
April 1945	99
August 1945	27[72]

That is, in the last year of the war the number of plays produced fell by 97 percent (from 857 per month to 27). Consolation performances sponsored by the Japan League of Touring Theaters dropped by half as well.[73] This is hardly surprising. What is truly amazing is that any kabuki productions were mounted at all during the intensive urban bombing in 1945.

Kabuki was especially hard hit because of its elaborate staging. Make-do casts were put together hand-to-mouth. Gaps in Osaka and Kyoto troupes were filled by actresses from *shinpa* and *shingeki*. The last program identified as Grand Kabuki in Osaka was performed by a mixed company of actresses and kabuki actors at the Naka-za in March 1945.[74] In July, Ichikawa Danshirō III, son of Ichikawa Ennosuke II, joined the Bright Modern Theater (Meirō Shingeki-za), a *shingeki* troupe, for the last month of the war.[75] A year earlier, Kichiemon had worried about maintaining high acting standards under the pressure of touring; in 1945, the few active performers were simply trying to survive.

By the end of May, touring was more necessary than ever, as three-fourths of Tokyo's and Osaka's theaters had been bombed or burned. Touring was relatively safe, but Kataoka Nizaemon XIII remembers "excruciatingly painful" kabuki tours through villages and small towns. He shouldered his way onto packed third-class carriages, rode in the back of trucks, played in dirty, ancient theaters, and ate scant rations while farmer audiences feasted on white rice and drank sake in front of the actors. He performed until midnight and rose before the sun to reach the troupe's next destination in time to set the stage for the evening show.[76] It was not a pleasant life for a man in middle age.

In the month before Japan's collapse, several younger kabuki actors found special ways to continue performing. In July, Ichikawa Ennosuke II traveled with his wife to isolated villages and towns in Kyushu. He danced wearing a plain black kimono while she changed records on the phonograph: "Like beggar entertainers we two performed this simple way, walking from place to place carrying our phonograph."[77] Other actors recall walking from town to town in order to give consolation performances. On the day before sur-

render, government pronouncements were still urging citizens to "unify one hundred million hearts" in order to "set His Majesty's mind at ease." Every citizen should "Burn with Resentment against the Unjust Enemy."[78]

Against this backdrop of despair on the one hand and dogged determination on the other, it is important to note that between January and August 1945, kabuki authorities in the three large urban centers reacted to the national crisis quite differently. In Tokyo, kabuki production revolved around the Shōchiku Corporation's great stars and large theaters. Because most of Shōchiku's theaters had been burned and its star actors had left Tokyo, by midyear it was extremely difficult for the company to stage kabuki in the city. Lacking a theater, Nakamura Kichiemon gave a free consolation performance on July 31 in Hibiya Park's open-air theater. He played one of his favorite roles, Kumagai Naozane, in *Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani*, supported by his brothers, Tokizō and Kanzaburō.[79] In Osaka, theaters were able to offer as many as three or four kabuki productions each month. Even after most theaters had been bombed, Combination New and Old Drama productions were staged at the reopened Ōsaka Kabuki-za in May, June, and July.[80] Kyoto was the only large city that was spared bombing. Between January and August, carefree spectators packed fifteen kabuki productions spread over eight theaters. (Shōchiku was responsible for one kabuki program; independent troupes mounted fourteen programs for short runs.)[81]

Japan Surrenders

On the eve of surrender, August 14, three kabuki productions were running in Japan. Osaka was bereft of kabuki.[82] Two programs of traditional plays were on stage in safe Kyoto. Nakamura Ganjirō II and Nakamura Tomijūrō IV led a group of main-line actors under Shōchiku management in a "Lively Kansai Grand Kabuki Popular Performance" at the Minami-za from August 5 to 14. Meanwhile the Number One Commando Kabuki Troupe (Gekidan Shin'ei Kabuki Daiichi-za) opened at the Mitomo Gekijō under Tōhō sponsorship on August 11, four days before the war's end.[83] The troupe, led by Nakamura Gannosuke I and Ichikawa Aratarō, had steadily produced kabuki programs in Osaka and Kyoto since its divorce from Shōchiku four years before. It would continue to produce short runs of standard kabuki in the postwar period.

Meanwhile in Tokyo, Ichikawa Ennosuke II brought the city's last kabuki program of the war to the Tōkyō Gekijō. It was a remarkable effort carried out in the teeth of nightly bombing raids. Several accounts describe the sequence of events. First, Ennosuke managed to pull together a small "volunteer conso-

lation" company of half a dozen actors. Next, they chose two plays, the knockabout farce-comedy *Shank's Mare* and one of Ennosuke's favorite dance plays, *Benkei aboard Ship.* His troupe staged the program twice a day from August 8 through 14. Critic Atsumi Seitarō describes the difficult situation:

> In late July, Ennosuke returned to Tokyo, where he raised the curtain on a pathetic August production at the unscathed Tōkyō Gekijō. On the bill were two pieces, undistinguished but intended to suit the tastes of an audience of Tokyo war victims (*sensaisha*). Lack of stage materials made it impossible to do more suitable pieces, so under the circumstances the plays were a good choice. On opening day, Ennosuke could not assemble a full cast: they did *Shank's Mare* with only five actors. After they carried on for a week, the bell rang ending the war.[84]

During the weeklong run, air raids forced Ennosuke to cancel four of fourteen scheduled performances, and six times the curtain was held, waiting for the B-29s to leave. Scenes were dropped for lack of time. The audience was deeply moved when Ennosuke went before the curtain to apologize for the inconvenience.[85] Ennosuke, in his autobiography, comments on this brave, sad production: "Cast members' homes had been burned down, and they had a hard time commuting from the suburbs. From one day to next, we never knew how many actors would arrive at the theater. After counting noses I'd say, 'Well, this is who we have today. How should we do the program?' On the spot, we'd recast roles as necessary and rearrange scenes."[86] The production was part of a final governmental effort in August to provide entertainment for air raid victims. Ennosuke's intention was to give one week of free consolation performances through August 14. City officials planned to distribute 30,000 complimentary tickets through Tokyo ward offices, but in early August the Tokyo municipal government was in such turmoil this could not be done. In the end, tickets were sold at the box office.[87]

Comedian Furukawa Roppa writes in his diary of walking in the pouring rain to see Ennosuke in *Shank's Mare* a few days before the war's end. Disgustedly he paid an exorbitant thirteen and a half yen for admission (nine yen tax and four and a half yen for the ticket) and noted that the good-sized Tōkyō Gekijō was nearly full. Roppa professed to be dismayed not by the farcical antics of Yajirobei and Kitahachi, the two comic heroes, nor by the catch-as-catch-can acting of the ragtag company, but by kabuki itself: "The sound of kabuki, its clanging *shamisen* and strident narrative music (*jōruri*), feel absolutely out of place at a time like this and in the world that we live in."[88] Roppa was a veteran actor who was extremely knowledgeable about kabuki, so the

surprise he expressed at kabuki's impact is itself surprising. I suspect he was listening to Ennosuke's performance in a genuinely new way in the context of firebombed, death-laden Tokyo in mid-August 1945. He was hearing the old-fashioned sounds of a defeated Japan, and their virtues were no longer self-evident to this consummate professional. Two years earlier, a newspaper account had condescendingly sneered that kabuki's greatest stars — Kikugorō, Kichiemon, Kōshirō, and Uzaemon — were has-beens, "upholding gallantly the traditions of the kabukidom, despite the rapidly changing world wherein the old is usually forgotten and replaced by the new."[89]

Ennosuke planned to end the week of consolation performances on August 14, to shut down for one day, and then reopen on August 16 for a normal, commercial run.[90] The last newspaper ad for kabuki published during the war vainly boasted: "Grand Kabuki: Ichikawa Ennosuke Troupe. Opens August 16, Tōkyō Gekijō."[91] The end of the war on August 15 preempted Ennosuke's plan.

On August 13, a Japanese government spokesman had responded with one last futile fulmination to the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and to Russia's declaration of war the previous week: "One Hundred Million Follow One Path in Solidarity. Easing His Majesty's Concerns, We Offer Blazing Resentment against an Inhuman Adversary."[92]

On August 14, the emperor recorded a speech of surrender that was broadcast to the nation the morning of August 15. The war was over. The failed cabinet of Prime Minister Suzuki Kantarō resigned that day, assigning to Japanese youth the task of "reconstructing the Japanese Empire."[93] Most theaters and movie houses shut down, and the last three wartime kabuki productions closed.[94]

Kabuki's Near Death Experience

Considering that American military forces had annihilated Japanese garrisons in one Pacific battle after another and formations of free-flying B-29s were turning Japan's cities and theaters to ashes, it would be easy to attribute kabuki's near demise in the late summer of 1945 to American actions. But we would be wrong to do so. We have seen that policies determined by Japanese bureaucrats, politicians, and military officers five and even ten years earlier reduced kabuki's status long before the war's end. Japanese military requirements caused the material shortages that curtailed kabuki production at home. Japanese bureaucrats closed the large theaters, ended major urban kabuki performances, reduced kabuki troupes to fifteen or twenty members, and forced troupes to undertake stripped down consolation tours in the provinces, thereby

emasculating the repertory. Japanese policymakers chose to reward popular troupes and modern dramas, deliberately shunting kabuki to the side. All of the policies and actions that gradually eroded kabuki's importance had occurred before urban theaters were burned in American bombing attacks from March to June 1945 and before American soldiers arrived in September 1945 to occupy the defeated nation.

Okamoto Shirō is one of few Japanese writers who acknowledges the Japanese government's responsibility for kabuki's near death experience: "Pressured by censorship and theater closings, the flame of kabuki was extinguished during the war."[95] And yet the flame was not quite snuffed out. Critics and actors may have despaired of kabuki, but Japan's exhausted citizens found in Ennosuke's comic antics and beautiful dance momentary distraction from the crushing burdens of the all-engrossing war. This small, final kabuki program offered a modest laugh and a tear of melancholy that were suited to the occasion. And the fact that Tokyo and Kansai actors managed somehow to play kabuki even in the final days of the war proved to be a harbinger of kabuki's remarkable renaissance in the postwar period.

No Comprehensive Plan for a Theater of "Japanese Spirit"

It retrospect it can be seen that theater artists and government bureaucrats failed to generate a "new theater" to serve the "new Japan" that millions of Japanese were fighting to create. For fifteen years the cabinets of fourteen Japanese administrations attempted to carry out policies that would unify all citizens behind a steadily expanding (and collapsing) war situation. The stakes were high. Kabuki, a flawed but significant theater form, occupied the attention of officials of the Bureau of Information, censors in the Special Higher Police Division of the Home Ministry, and military information officers. The boldest move to reform the nature of Japanese theater took the form of Citizens' Drama, intended to supplant kabuki and other older genres. But who today remembers a single one of the new plays designated "Citizens' Drama"? Iizuka Tomoichirō's dream for a network of national theaters that would replace capitalist theater management with direct state control was bold and imaginative, but it proved as nebulous and illusory as Albert Speer's model for a rebuilt Berlin in Nazi Germany. Despite a torrent of rhetoric, Japanese officials did not advance a comprehensive, practical plan for a truly new and more "Japanese" theater culture. Institutions to nourish, train, and support Citizens' Drama playwrights, actors, and directors were essential, and these were never seriously planned.

Nor did officials in the Home Ministry or Bureau of Information replace theater managers and directors with acolytes under their thumb, as Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels had done in Germany. In 1933–1934, when the Nazis came to power, they fired the directors of major theaters and symphony orchestras, and they purged 49 out of 85 opera house manager-directors, replacing them with "Party Members and sympathizers."[96] In this way the Nazis exercised powerful, direct control over theater, music, and other arts.[97] But in Japan, kabuki and other commercial theater performance continued to be managed directly by capitalist owners (Shōchiku and Ōtani in the case of kabuki). The various Japanese cabinets never established the kind of "corporatist cultural bodies" that controlled the arts in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy.

The Japan League of Touring Theaters was carefully organized, well funded, and efficiently run throughout the war. But otherwise "achievements" government officials could point to regarding theater, and especially kabuki, were almost all negative: closing major theaters, reducing troupe size, truncating programs, capping ticket prices, and banning undesirable plays. In brief, between 1931 and 1945 the Japanese government did not succeed in creating a new theater of "Japanese Spirit." And in the eight final excruciating months of war, in 1945, the nation's military, economic, and social losses precluded any new positive moves in support of a "new theater."

CHAPTER ELEVEN

War Plays in Kabuki — a Retrospection | August 1945

Loyalty to the emperor is beyond obligation and revenge.
— *Beyond Obligation and Revenge*, kabuki play

Friendly comrades . . . together in Manila, Singapore, Malaya, and Burma. — *Ten Thousand Cheers for the South Seas*, kabuki play

Japanese airplanes are dropping bombs on Pearl Harbor! Drop more! More!! — *Honolulu City*, kabuki play

Kabuki's role during Japan's fifteen-year Sacred War is essentially unknown in the West, and in Japan it is either forgotten or ignored. That era of military horrors is so embarrassing or painful, even after some seventy years, that most Japanese do not wish to confront it. But I believe more important than that, the era contradicts Western illusions of what kabuki was and Japanese desires for what kabuki should be.

I have not raised kabuki's participation in the Manchurian Incident, the China Incident, and the War of Greater East Asia in order to criticize that participation. During the war, kabuki producers and artists followed the broad social trends of the times, and they supported the government's war aims as did most Japanese citizens. Especially after December 1941, powerful political and social pressure enforced conformity. Kabuki actors were not college educated or politically sophisticated people. They were professional artists focused on developing their careers and perfecting their art. They were "Japanese," bound to the only culture and the only land that most of them knew. Further, theater is a group activity, dependent on an elaborate, expensive infrastructure of theater buildings, stage craftsmen, and institutional support. Unlike the poet or painter, who can create alone in a mountain hut if need be, the kabuki playwright or actor must work in collaboration with scores of others. And commercial theater performances had to appeal to the mood of general audiences.

I believe that Ōtani Takejirō and Gōda Toku were patriotic citizens who wanted to support their nation in a time of national emergency. Onoe Kikugorō and Nakamura Kichiemon lent their star power to the nation, as did Bob Hope and Betty Grable in America. In both countries, popular actors were called on to promote war bond drives, star in hate-the-enemy plays or films, and offer morale performances for the fighting troops overseas. Theater was an important medium through which the government attempted to control and mold public opinion in support of the war. Donald Keene's judgment regarding Japanese authors during the war applies equally, I believe, to theater artists: "Perhaps it is too much to ask of anyone that he should openly have resisted, when to resist invited death. . . . The writer, by becoming a public figure, was under pressure to act with the uniformity expected of all Japanese, and forfeited his right to the individual conscience of the artist."[1]

I discuss this period because it shows that during the long war years, from 1931 to 1945, the world of kabuki functioned in consonance with contemporary political and social authority. Kabuki was an active player in government movements and campaigns tied to the national war mission. In scores of new plays, kabuki artists played out stories based on the present moment, most particularly the war that impinged on every aspect of Japanese life, and they recast historical events to conform to current imperial ideology. Kabuki producers during the war did what kabuki producers have always done: they enticed audiences into their theaters by offering programs that mixed familiar traditional scenes with one or more new plays about contemporary life.

Therefore, a grievous consequence of our forgetting or erasing kabuki's wartime history is that, as part of this historical absence, we have been unaware that kabuki theater was a living, contemporary performing art as late as 1945. When the war was over and American Occupation officials responsible for theater arrived in Japan, they were told that kabuki plays were wholly "traditional" and carried no "meaning" for modern audiences. Consequently, according to this view, and this was the important point, kabuki drama did not present a threat to the democratic aims of the Occupation. (We have seen that according to one strand of scholarly opinion in Japan, theme or content was unimportant in kabuki drama.)[2] One week after Japan's surrender, Ōtani Takejirō announced that Shōchiku's basic postwar policy was to perform only traditional kabuki plays.[3] Shōchiku denied overnight pickle plays in its campaign to legitimize feudal, militaristic kabuki in American eyes and rescue kabuki from the ashes of national defeat. In place of a mixed repertory of traditional and contemporary plays, Shōchiku now committed itself to a wholly classical repertory, thus turning the fabricated myth that kabuki was a "pure

art" into reality. This is the origin of the repetitious, traditional kabuki programs that we know today.

In the final chapter I will look briefly at how this enormous change in the nature of kabuki was brought about after August 15, 1945. But first we need to remind ourselves that kabuki theater for all its faults and problems was deeply involved in the political and social life of the nation during the war years. Let us look more closely at how new plays related to Japan's desperate war situation. As examples, I will consider in some detail four war plays that I have introduced earlier.

Loyal Retainers of the Genroku Era

Kabuki playwrights were adept at linking Japan's present war situation to important events and famous personages from Japanese history. A number of the so-called new-history dramas, or *shin-jidaigeki*, were inspired by the bitter clash between Tokugawa Ieyasu, the founder of the Tokugawa Shogunate, and the heirs of Toyotomi Hideyoshi, whom Ieyasu destroyed in his siege of Ōsaka Castle (1614–1615). Yoshida Genjirō's *Ōsaka Castle* (1930) and Mayama Seika's *Three Generations of the Toyotomi Clan* (1934) and *Hideyori's Last Hours* (1937), depicting the death of Hideyoshi's son and heir, are three examples of imperial-inspired new-history plays staged in kabuki theaters in the 1930s.

No event captured the imaginations of Japanese people, high and low, more than the Akō clan vendetta of 1701–1703, most famously dramatized in the *bunraku* and kabuki play *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* (1748). In 1938, *Engei gahō* had run a forty-page special section, "A Photo Collection of Plays of the Righteous Akō Warriors: Representing the National Spirit." It listed 106 plays celebrating the absolute loyalty of the Akō clan retainers who avenged the death of their lord. Many were kabuki plays written just before or during the war: *That Time at Akō Castle* (1930), set by author Kimura Kinka among arguing retainers back home in the Akō clan castle; *Horibe Yahei* (1939), in which playwright Uno Nobuo examined one retainer's place in the vendetta; *Kanpei's Death* (1940), by Okamoto Kidō, cast in the guise of a detective story; and Nagata Kōichi's *Judgment of the Righteous Akō Retainers* (1941), which begins after the vendetta has been accomplished, to name a few.[4]

The most influential wartime reinterpretation of the Akō vendetta is the ten-play cycle *Loyal Retainers of the Genroku Era*, composed by Mayama Seika between 1934 and 1941 for Ichikawa Sadanji II. Brian Powell points out in his detailed study of Mayama's career that the playwright was famous for carrying

out obsessive research in order to write truthfully about the past. Mayama was also praised for the rich dramatic language he brought to his characterizations.[5] Finally, he was notorious for writing exceedingly long monologues.

The impetus for Mayama to revisit the well-explored Akō story came from Shōchiku president Ōtani Takejirō. He persuaded Mayama to look at the popular heroes from a contemporary perspective, and, as Powell notes, Ōtani "was still pressing for scripts in 1938."[6] Even further, Mayama publicly acknowledged that Ōtani was his collaborator and, to some extent at least, his co-author: "From the beginning, President Ōtani worked with me, scene by scene, refining and contributing original ideas for characterization, plotting, and scene development. Without his zealous collaboration and constant encouragement, I could not have continued writing."[7] The series represents the archetype of new-history play, showing, in Peter High's formulation, "feudal-era heroes demonstrating 'modern' devotion to the Emperor and the divinely originated state."[8] With great aplomb Mayama parachuted anachronistic thoughts of imperial loyalty into the heads and hearts of feudal-era characters: Kuranosuke, the tenaciously loyal chief retainer of the Akō clan, is deeply worried that he might offend the emperor.[9] Kuranosuke shows a twentieth-century concern for achieving his vengeance through righteous means, just as Japan should gain victory in Asia by acting righteously. And Kuranosuke expresses sympathy for the welfare of clan peasants, an idea important to rightist military figures in the 1930s but scarcely imagined by samurai living in the eighteenth century.[10] The cycle's overriding theme is the intense loyalty of the hero, Kuranosuke, a loyalty that Powell says "is expressed as a consciousness of being the inheritor of one's dead lord's wishes."[11] To enhance the martial spirit of his scripts, Mayama excised domestic or family scenes that make up half of the traditional *Treasury of Loyal Retainers*.

After Sadanji's death in 1940, with Shōchiku's strong financial backing the Vanguard Troupe staged the full ten-play series, play by play, at the Shinbashi Enbujō, under the direction of Waseda University professor Kawatake Shigetoshi (Fig. 11.1). Subsequently, the troupe toured the plays to theaters operated by Shōchiku in Osaka and Kyoto. And in 1944 and 1945, the troupe traveled to smaller cities with a condensed wartime edition (*senji kaitei han*) of the cycle. In all, Shōchiku saturated the nation with more than twenty Vanguard productions of *Loyal Retainers of the Genroku Era* at the direct order of President Ōtani Takejirō.[12] The Vanguard actors then recast their interpretation of the play into a grandiose two-part film directed by Mizoguchi Kenji (1941). The Bureau of Information touted it as a stellar example of Citizens' Film

Fig. 11.1. *The Second Messenger,* the second play in Mayama Seika's *Loyal Retainers of the Genroku Era* cycle, Vanguard Theatre Troupe, Shinbashi Enbujō, March 1941. Ōishi Kuranosuke (Kawarazaki Chōjūrō IV) receives a welcome message from the Second Messenger: Lord Asano has not been accused of disrespect toward the imperial throne. (From Nakamura Umenosuke et al., eds., *Gurafu Zenshin-za*)

(*kokumin eiga*), a counterpart to Citizens' Drama, designed to bolster home front morale. This cinematically famous film reached Japanese audiences four days before the start of the Pacific War.[13]

Japanese who used the term "new-history play" recognized that the past was being reexamined and refashioned in order to speak to the present. But all writing about the past, both history and fiction, alters that past. The process is not peculiar to kabuki, or Japan, or a war environment. The story of Antigone's civil disobedience toward the Athenian state inspired playwrights Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides each to compose a new interpretation of the event in consonance with the mood of his day. Shakespeare puffed up past kings of England in scenes exalting their abilities and power, to the delight of patriotic Elizabethan audiences. The British film *That Hamilton Woman* (1941), set during the Napoleonic Wars, was a "new-history film" intended to comment on World War II. When Laurence Olivier, as Lord Horatio Nelson, rages, "You will never make peace with Napoleon. He means to be master of the world. You cannot make peace with dicators," audiences were expected to think of Adolf Hitler, not Napoleon.[14]

Beyond Obligation and Revenge

A second play of unusual interest is one of many new-history plays that was set in the last days of the Tokugawa era and heralded the coming of the imperial state. Experts held up Suga Kanjirō's *Beyond Obligation and Revenge* as a splendid model for new kabuki writing during wartime.[15] The play opened to full houses on November 30, 1941, eight days before Wild Eagle pilots of the Japanese Imperial Navy bombed Pearl Harbor. The drama explored the pain and gratification that sacrifice for the imperial cause engendered, and it conditioned audiences to endure similar sacrifices. The script won first prize in Shōchiku's Kabuki Investigation Committee Drama Contest, intended "to discover a new form of kabuki drama, and was named a Board of Information Recommended Citizens' Drama."[16] The great actor Onoe Kikugorō VI played the leading role, and Shōchiku gave the play a lavish production at the Kabukiza in Tokyo.

The play's Japanese title, *Onshū ijō,* reflects the wartime dynamic of an extremely tense period. The dictionary definition of *onshū* is "love and hate" (or "passions," as the *Japan Times & Advertiser* put it).[17] However, Shōchiku chose a more nationalistic translation, "beyond obligation and revenge," for its English-language announcements and advertising.[18] In publicity releases, Shōchiku stressed that author Suga was a working man, currently a postman and formerly a milkman and factory hand. He was an amateur playwright "born in the obscure country town of Yokobori in Akita Prefecture," implying his play was imbued with honest rural virtues. Such a play was assumed to embody "Japanese spirit."[19]

Beyond Obligation and Revenge, set five years before the Meiji emperor assumed power, interweaves two sets of conflicting loyalties. First, the younger brother, Shinjirō, allies himself with the samurai faction that is supporting shogunal rule, while the older brother, Bansaku, wants to follow a merchant's life free from samurai control. And second, their father, Shinbei, seeks revenge for past wrongs done to his family by Arima Sōnoshin, a supporter of imperial rule. Under shogunal law of that time, Shinbei's sons were duty bound to honor their father's quest for revenge. But at this turning point in the nation's history, both sons abandon their father's old-fashioned hatreds in order to pursue "modern" objectives. One son embraces the new ethic of imperial loyalty, and the other devotes himself to building a successful capitalist enterprise.

In act 2, Arima bows humbly before Shinbei, asking him to pardon the wrongs that Arima has done Shinbei in the past. Arima believes that under

the benevolent rule of the emperor-to-be, the old samurai code of vengeance will not be necessary. Arima sums up his motive in a speech to Shinbei.

> ARIMA (*resolutely*): Yes, I understand. On this day, I harbor no thought of hatred, no desire for revenge. There is something much greater, something much larger, that I must embrace as a true Japanese. I will devote myself to its achievement alone.[20]

That "something" is restoration of imperial rule and destruction of the Tokugawa Shogunate (*kinnō tōbaku*). Not only will loyalty to the emperor replace the ethic of clan honor, a later scene shows imperial loyalty trumping loyalty to one's closest blood kin as well. When Arima says that he has killed Shinjirō in a battle between imperial and shogunal supporters, Bansaku instinctively draws his sword to avenge the death of his brother. Then he stops. Throughout the conflict between supporters of the two political systems, Bansaku has stayed neutral to protect his business. Now he realizes that by standing aside, he has caused his brother's death.

> BANSAKU (*weeping*): Arima, I have been wrong. I have thought only about my own affairs. Earlier, you forgave my father, who was your enemy. My brother was killed because I was thoughtless. I am so ashamed. Can you forgive me? . . . Arima, your work is just beginning. Don't give up. (*To Shinbei.*) Father, do not worry. I have not a coin to my name, but I will restore our business. It will flourish as never before.[21]

Contest judges, urged on by the Bureau of Information, found, or said they found, a "new form of kabuki play" in Suga's work.[22] And this new form of kabuki was especially suited to disparate audiences scattered through the countryside, where kabuki's future was to be found.

In any case this was the official view. But plays about the emerging imperial state presented certain obstacles to their acceptance. Okuda Yachio, writing in *Engei gahō,* grumbled that the playwright did not depict characters fully or properly. One scene involving a Westerner was "insufficiently repellent." And more important, Arima, a major figure in the play, came off as complaisant and lacking in samurai stature.[23] *Nihon engeki* critic Minagi Eizō was so incensed by Bansaku's lack of reverence for the emperor (*sonnō*) he sarcastically titled his review "Beyond Disappointment and Despair." Contrary to the selection committee's view, Minagi insisted the playwright failed to breathe new life into old kabuki. New kabuki plays must be born out of the "spirit of a new Citizens' Drama." Most troubling was the fact that Bansaku, imbued with

a "mercantile spirit," accepted "American and European business systems" without question. Consequently the play did not provide a correct model for "patriotic businessmen." In sum, the judges should not have selected this play: "My dissatisfaction with *Beyond Obligation and Revenge* is dissatisfaction with the Kabuki Investigation Committee."[24]

In Suga's play, audiences learned from Arima's actions that devotion to the imperial cause could sweep away the old feudal obligation to uphold family honor through revenge.[25] And they learned from Bansaku's actions that it was all right to amass money through commercial enterprises. But Suga did not reconcile Bansaku's economic self-interest with Arima's selfless devotion to the emperor. This lack of dramatic resolution is not the result of happenstance or amateur playwriting. I believe Suga's play accurately reflects the conflict between selfless devotion due the imperial system and egoistic self-interest required by capitalism. These two ideological pillars of the Meiji state are in fact irreconcilable.[26]

Honolulu City: An Overnight Pickle War Play, 1942

Honolulu City by Gōda Toku is perhaps the most unusual overnight pickle play created during the war. It was written and staged during the euphoria that gripped the entire nation in the months following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor. It is the only kabuki play I know of that is set entirely in America (Hawai'i).[27] Although the setting is a foreign country, the action is not about foreigners, that is, Caucasian Americans. Like a Hollywood movie that follows an American hero into a foreign setting, *Honolulu City* is about Japanese who happen to live in a foreign environment, Issei immigrants and their Nisei, or second-generation, children born in America. *Honolulu City* was presented at the Ōsaka Kabuki-za in February 1942 by Ichikawa Ennosuke's New Commando Troupe from Tokyo augmented by young Kansai actors (Fig. 11.2). The cast repeated the play in Kobe and Nagoya in March, and a Tokyo production was planned for April.[28] Gōda tells us in an endnote to the play that he received a "hint" to write *Honolulu City* when Bureau of Information deputy director Okamura Kiwao spoke at the "Citizens' Grand Conference to Destroy America and Britain," held on December 10, that is, two days after the Pearl Harbor bombing. Presumably Okamura urged Gōda and other participants to join the campaign to denounce American thought. In *Honolulu City*, Gōda glorifies Japanese spiritual values and decries American racism. It is one of the most explicitly ideological plays written for kabuki actors during the war.[29]

The scene is the Yamato Hotel overlooking Pearl Harbor, which is owned

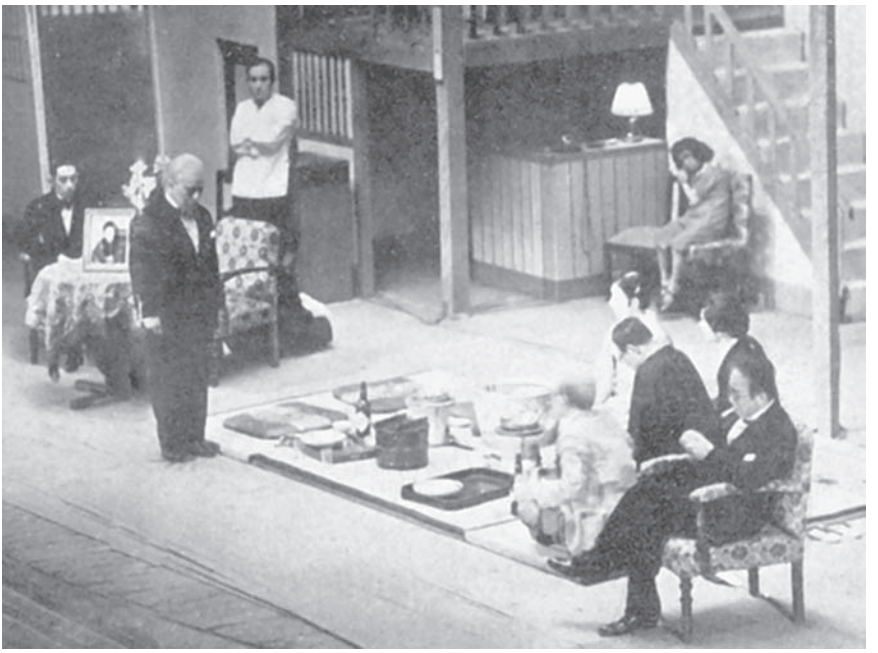


Fig. 11.2. Gōda Toku's *Honolulu City,* Ōsaka Kabuki-za, February 1942. The time is December 7–8, 1941. Japanese language school principal Kamibayashi (Ichikawa Jukai III) bows respectfully to Yamato Hotel owner Motoida (Ichikawa Ennosuke II, seated). Both men, loyal to Japan, cheer lustily when bombs start to fall on Pearl Harbor. (From *Engei gahō*, March 1942)

by first generation Japanese immigrant Motoida Sōbei (Ichikawa Ennosuke II). The time is the evening of December 7 (Japan time), the night before the Pearl Harbor attack. Scene 1 introduces Tamihei (Ichikawa Danshirō III), Motoida's youngest son, a recent graduate of McKinley High School (known locally as "Tokyo High") in Honolulu. Gōda describes him thus: "He appears ill at ease, his American-born Nisei Yankeeness at odds with an innate Japanese dignity." Motoida's brother-in-law Kamibayashi Ichitarō (Ichikawa Jukai III), principal of the local Japanese language school, is visiting. He urges Tamihei to be loyal to Japan regardless of what occurs in the current struggle with America. Kamibayashi rages against the unfathomable arrogance and duplicity of white Americans.

KAMIBAYASHI (*transported*): You can't understand these people! I can't understand them! Ambassadors Nomura and Kurusu have been negotiating since April, attempting to grasp the Americans' true intentions. But they can't understand them. Prime Minister Tōjō and

his cabinet can't understand them! One hundred million Japanese citizens can't understand them! (*Pause*.) Look, we're legally in China through the Nine Power Pact, and we'll stay there. With one hand, America stubbornly defends its "basic principles" and with the other, it sends reinforcements to the Third Army in the Philippines. The British fleet appeared in Singapore and set up an anti-Japanese blockade of the sea-lanes. China is getting military aid through Indochina and the Burma Road. Britain has massed troops on the Thai border! The ABCD military encirclement of Japan is growing stronger! Tamihei, you know this, of course. America's Pacific Fleet is in Pearl Harbor. A thousand planes stand by at Hickam and Ford and Wheeler airfields. . . . One entire army corps is stationed at Schofield Barracks and six other bases, reinforced by three mechanized battalions. One hand is offered in peace, while the other hand grabs Japan by the throat![30]

Tamihei, deeply conflicted, blurts out: "I have two nationalities, two languages, two national flags to honor." I am, he says, "a Nisei American citizen" and therefore duty bound to fight for America, but in my heart, "I am Japanese, I am Japanese! . . . I dream of beautiful Japan. . . . Beautiful Japan!" Kamibayashi replies that he dreams of America's destruction.

KAMIBAYASHI: We immigrants have a dream, too. It is what your father wishes for. . . . Oh, I want our naval pilots to attack and bomb Hawai'i and Honolulu! I don't care if my new hotel is blown up, too! When Japan, suffering pitifully now, attacks its enemy America, my prayer is: "Please destroy America utterly!"[31]

Scene 2 opens with Motoida speaking passionately to several assembled Issei and Nisei:

MOTOIDA (*face flushed*): The captain gave a talk yesterday at the Japanese Association meeting: "Even though our holy war is bogged down on the Chinese mainland," he said, "the Japanese Empire will never crumble, no matter how much the war costs or how long it takes. War expenditure may be ten million a year or a hundred million. We will endure ten years, twenty years. And when we destroy the approaching enemy, Japan will show its true national power! Americans look at us immigrants in Hawai'i with coldly contemptuous eyes, but anti-Japanese actions will not sway Japan! America is attacking Japan now, but in a year it will find the expense unbearable! Swallow your tears

> and bear the abuse." That's what the captain said! I'm an old man. . . . If bombs from my homeland pulverize my Yamato Hotel, I will wave our national flag and joyously shout banzai! I earnestly pray to end my life that way. . . . I will find happiness being burned and killed by Japanese bombs. . . . I believe it! People say it is absolutely impossible, but I believe soon Japanese airplanes will bomb Hawai'i![32]

In scene 3, Motoida commiserates with his middle son, Tadao (Ichikawa Chūsha VIII), a soldier in the American army. He begs Tadao not to abandon his Japanese Spirit, which Tadao's deceased mother taught him. "Soon," Tadao says, "I will be asked to fire my rifle at my Japanese homeland." Seeing no way out for his son, Hon'ida weeps in despair. Tadao assures his father that he remembers his childhood lessons in Japanese Spirit: "They show the one path, and I am determined to follow that path." Motoida understands Tadao's intention to kill himself. Father and son fall sobbing into each other's arms. A moment later, tremendous explosions are heard offstage.[33]

The final brief scenes take place during the Pearl Harbor air raid to sounds of exploding bombs and air raid sirens. The stage set is lowered to reveal a distant view of Pearl Harbor. Everyone climbs onto the hotel porch roof to watch explosions and smoke rising from anchored American ships. Motoida ecstatically waves a Japanese national flag overhead. His eldest son, Hiroshi (Morita Kanya XIV), a banker in a staid American firm, tries to stop him, but Hiroshi, too, is overcome with excitement:

> MOTOIDA: Airplanes! Japanese airplanes are dropping bombs on Pearl Harbor! Drop more! More! Blow up my hotel! I don't care! (*Laughing and crying he shouts and waves the flag.*)
> HIROSHI: Father! You can't wave the Japanese flag! Not the Japanese flag!
> MOTOIDA: Don't be a fool! Don't be a fool! I've waited thirty years! Today everything is changed! In one day! Oh, this day! This day! This day! Ha, ha, ha, ha! (*Hiroshi, too, joins in shouts of banzai*).

The final scene returns to the parlor of the hotel. The body of Tadao, dressed in his American army uniform, lies in a chair. During the air raid Tadao has killed himself.

> MOTOIDA (*standing beside Tadao*): It's not a bad thing that you've done. It's a good thing. Of the Japanese race (*Nihon minzoku*), you stood between the laws of your birth country, America, and Japan, your fatherland. From the beginning you were prepared . . . determined

to return home. It is a good thing . . . a fine thing that you have done. (*He weeps.*)

TAMIHEI (*quietly*): The Japanese race . . . The Japanese fatherland . . . (*All weep. Sound of bombs exploding. Motoida gently drapes the Japanese flag over Tadao's body. Curtain.*)[34]

The reviewer in *Engei gahō* praised the play for "richly dramatizing the suffering endured by three sons of Japanese blood who hold dual national allegiances." And he addressed the common problem confronting authors of overnight pickle plays: "While the subject matter is excellent for an *ichiyazuke* play, in this rushed situation only the playwright's skill has prevented the play's difficult content from collapse."[35]

Honolulu City explicitly proclaimed the government's racial position: a Japanese, wherever he or she might be born, was indissolubly attached to the homeland and owed loyalty to the emperor. Motoida and Kamibayashi, who were first-generation immigrants, naturally considered Japan their "homeland." The play promotes the idea that the three Nisei, though American citizens by birth, feel a powerful racial and cultural solidarity with homeland Japan. Gōda, who had never visited Hawai'i, did not know that most American Nisei chose to support the land of their birth, not their ancestry. Gōda also wildly exaggerates the size of American forces in Hawai'i and the Philippines in order to paint America the aggressor and Japan the victim. Several times characters say that America is "attacking Japan." In taking this line, Gōda was following government propaganda that Japan's attacks on Hawai'i, Southeast Asia, and the Pacific islands were defensive actions. The final moment of the play is symbolically potent: the Japanese flag erases from sight the corpse of the defeated American army, just as the Japanese flag was soon to cover all of Asia and the Pacific. *Honolulu City* is a true *ichiyazuke*, written within a month of the event it dramatized.

Civilian Fads in Overnight Pickle Plays

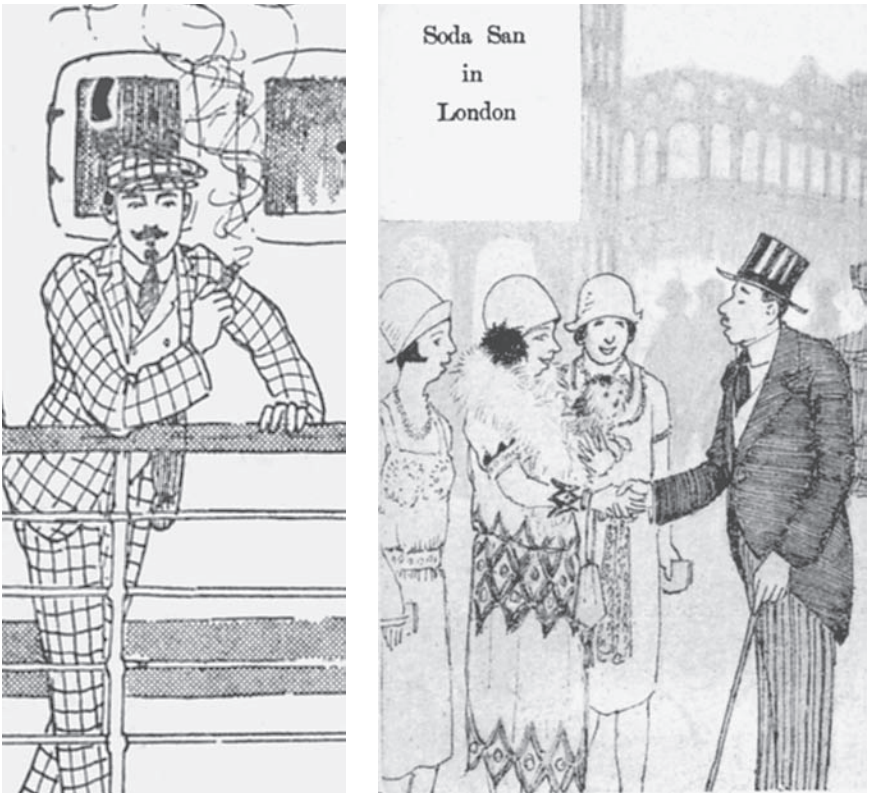
Before Japan began its military expansion into China in 1931, kabuki artists had been writing and staging overnight pickle plays about modern (post-Tokugawa) Japan for five decades. I have discussed how playwrights dramatized events of the Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895) and the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905) in kabuki war plays. The fads and curiosities of civilian life were also put on the kabuki stage with great gusto. When the Italian promoter Chiarini brought

his Western circus to Japan in the summer of 1886, within months Onoe Kikugorō V was starring in *Chiarini's Astounding Circus*, sharing the stage of the Chitose-za in Tokyo with "horses and elephants."[36] Kikugorō V, who was a specialist in stage stunts (*keren*), had another kabuki hit in *Riding the Famous Hot-Air Balloon* at the Kabuki-za in 1891. An Englishman named Spencer had parachuted from a balloon into Tokyo's Ueno Park, narrowly missing the tent where the Meiji emperor was viewing the aerial feats. Playing Spencer a few weeks later, Kikugorō was hoisted by ropes and pulleys high above the stage, where he addressed his audience in English: "Ladies and gentlemen. I have been up three thousand feet. Looking down, I was pleased to see you in this Kabuki-za. . . . Ladies and gentlemen, with all my heart, I thank you."[37]

Again in 1894, Kikugorō displayed cosmopolitan inclinations when he played a floppy-legged, red-cheeked Raggedy Ann doll in *Mimicking the Bell-Ringing Marionette* at the Ichimura-za.[38] In an even more bizarre arrangement, Ichikawa Danjūrō IX, who was Kikugorō's greatest acting rival, played opposite visiting French actress Theo Mann-Master at the Kabuki-za. House playwright Fukuchi Ōchi cobbled together a short script in French and Japanese, and on July 28, 29, and 30, 1894, at the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War, Danjūrō and Theo performed the prophetically titled *Mutual Suspicions* as one item on "A Program to Thank Japanese Military Stationed in Korea."[39] Despite the producer's patriotic pronouncement, a critic dismissed the play as manifestly absurd: "Neither performer understood the words spoken by the other, and the audience could do no more than say 'hmm.' "[40]

Kabuki actors assumed the guise of Europeans in a number of productions early in the twentieth century. To mention a few examples, Sawamura Sōnosuke I played Brutus in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* in 1907 (speaking in English), and Ichikawa Sadanji II played Satin in *Lower Depths* in 1910. Morita Kanya XIII was Hamlet in 1919 and Jean Valjean in *Les Misérables* in 1920, while Matsumoto Kōshirō VII played Scarpia in *Tosca* in 1913 and the Moor in *Othello* in 1925 to Ichikawa Sadanji II's Iago. Western drama and literature were a part of Japan's "modern" twentieth-century culture. For a Japanese actor to be considered to play Shakespeare "just as well as an English actor" was evidence of Japan's acceptance by European nations.[41]

The early 1910s marked the beginning of so-called Taishō democracy (1912–1926). Culturally it was known as a freewheeling era of chic "modern girls" (*moga*) and "modern boys" (*mobo*). It was the time of the permanent wave, cafes, bars, taxi dancing, and American jazz. Overnight pickle plays of the 1920s expressed an innocent enjoyment of the moment coupled with an openness to the outside world. Art Deco designs were seen in architecture



Figs. 11.3a–b. A prewar overnight pickle play, *Mr. Sōda in London*, set overseas, was performed by kabuki actors, led by Sawamura Sōjūrō VII, and young actresses attached to the Teikoku Gekijō, in February 1929. Program sketches show a debonair Sōda smoking a cigar on board ship and shaking hands with Empire Theater actresses Rose Beaufort, Violet, and Lily outside the Monaco Café in London's Piccadilly Circus. Sōda's formal behavior and his stiff cutaway and silk topper appear slightly comic. (Teikoku Gekijō program, February 1929, author's collection)

and clothing. As one example, kabuki star Sawamura Sōjūrō VII and young actresses attached to the Teikoku Gekijō romped through a carefree overnight pickle play, *Mr. Sōda in London*, in February 1929. Wealthy Mr. Sōda dresses and acts the part of an international sophisticate, but unfortunately he cannot speak or understand a word of English, so his best efforts are in vain (Figs. 11.3a–b).

But with the start of the war, the self-indulgent characters of the earlier era and the easy mixing of Japanese and Western customs became politically suspect. Nonetheless, these peacetime plays provided a convenient bridge to overnight pickle war plays that followed in the 1930s. It was but a short step

from showing unusual civilians acting in a daring fashion to valorizing soldier-heroes of the China war. Later in the war, overnight pickle plays took up other themes: a mother's sacrifice (*If to the Sea*), military comradeship (*Pearl Harbor*), resilience on the home front (*Patriotic Military March*), and Japan's civilizing mission in Asia (*Breaking Dawn*).

A Late War Play: *Ten Thousand Cheers for the South Seas*

Ten Thousand Cheers for the South Seas is one of the last kabuki plays set during the war — that is, one of the last kabuki overnight pickle war plays. Its ideological aim was to lend support to the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. It was staged at the Meiji-za on the January 1944 bill, one month before the cabinet closed the Meiji-za and other major theaters under the first Emergency Decree Guidelines. *Ten Thousand Cheers for the South Seas* is a short dance play set on an unnamed island in the South Seas, written by Kimura Tomiko, wife of kabuki playwright Kimura Kinka (Fig. 11.4). She was an admired professional playwright who specialized in composing kabuki dance plays. Young kabuki actor Nakamura Kanzaburō XVII, an *onnagata* specialist at that time, and Ichikawa Enshō III played the roles of Komatsu and Wakamatsu, two Japanese female dancers. In most overnight pickle plays it was difficult to determine if actors were following traditional acting techniques (*kata*) in their performance and if they were supported by traditional *shamisen*, drum, and flute music. In this case, we know that Kanzaburō and Enshō executed Hanayagi Juho's standard kabuki dance choreography, which they danced to Nagauta music composed by kabuki musician Kineya Sakichi. If one had only watched the actors' dance movements and listened to the music, the performance would have appeared wholly traditional. Only the subject matter, the exploitation of natural resources in the southern regions, was contemporary. We might say the artists wrapped and concealed modernity within a shell of kabuki convention.

The one-page text of the play, in the form of song lyrics, was published in the Meiji-za monthly program for January 1944. It is likely playwright Kimura believed she had to emphasize the contemporary content and not the conventional form of the piece in order to pass the censor's scrutiny. In a program note she tied the play to Japan's military conquests and political policies in the Pacific:

> Entering the third year of the Sacred War, our military forces attack the American and British enemy without cease, while construction of the

Fig. 11.4. *Ten Thousand Cheers for the South Seas*, Meiji-za, January 1944. Two sophisticated Japanese maidens (Nakamura Kanzaburō XVII and Ichikawa Enshō III) play the nō drum and dance with open fan. They live in a world above and apart from the nearly naked natives, who kneel and squat subserviently in the background. (Meiji-za program, January 1944, author's collection)

> Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere advances. In particular, our creation of prosperity for the South Seas by developing its abundant natural resources constitutes a complete and imperishable victory. Above all, *Ten Thousand Cheers for the South Seas*, danced by innocent Japanese maidens, consecrates the New Year. . . . Letting our thoughts run to the distant South Seas, our dance proffers solace to virtuous and brave officers and men in the military and prays for glad tidings in economic development.

The setting appears to be a small Polynesian island, while the lyrics celebrate the abundant natural resources of tropical Southeast Asia. Below are Kimura's complete dance lyrics.

Verse 1: Banzai, ten thousand cheers for eternal youth, for Greater East Asia's eternal glory. At New Year's turn, victorious in battle throughout the South Seas, our Rising Sun flag flies, lively in the breeze, high in an open sky, o'er this island stage. Felicitations — the wizened ancient feels young, the old woman's wrinkles are smoothed.

Verse 2: Cast aside past dreams. Friendly comrades, transplant here the wisdom of our Japanese homeland. Together building, growing, flourishing, in Manila, Singapore, Malaya, and Burma. Foreheads asweat, we battle to mine rich natural resources — gold, tin, and iron — and harvest rubber and hemp.

Verse 3: Rice! Sugar! Lumber! Load a thousand, ten thousand ships. Prepare to depart, scales o'er-tipped with goods, one hundred tons, no, one thousand tons, heavy laden, never tiring, beyond gain and loss, our nation's sure strength.

Verse 4: Play the drum, spread the dance fan. Our prayers consecrate ten thousand years of the shining imperial reign.[42]

The writing, reeking of racial superiority and imperial exploitation, illustrates the ideological contradictions inherent in Japan's Asian mission: Japan and other Asian nations were equal as fellow Asians, yet Japanese also believed they were culturally superior to other Asians. Kimura has given the two Japanese maidens names and has made them the sole agents of action. Meanwhile the local islanders are nameless, powerless observers. The visual iconography shows that Japan is the superior civilization. The Japanese dancers are elegantly dressed, encased in a sophisticated culture, one might say, while the

natives, nearly naked and decorated with primitive feathers, are incapable of creating a beautiful art that is natural to the Japanese. Finally, the practical economic benefits of Asian co-prosperity are said to be one-way, flowing to Japan and away from the colonies. Even at this late date in the war, a critic felt free to write sardonically: "The play shows what kabuki will be like when it advances south of the equator."[43]

Ubiquitous War Plays

As we have seen, scores of authors between 1931 and 1945 contributed war plays for kabuki production. This included skilled professionals Kikuchi Kan, Mayama Seika, Uno Nobuo, Kikuta Kazuo, Kaneko Yōbun, Matsui Shōō, Gōda Toku, Kawaguchi Matsutarō, Kimura Kinka, Kimura Tomiko, Yoshida Genjirō, among others. It is also notable that war plays were not restricted to a few special theaters. While many of the plays I have discussed were produced at the rather conservative Kabuki-za in Tokyo, producers at every theater rode the bandwagon of patriotic jingoism, staging numerous wartime overnight pickle plays. Especially venturesome were the managers of the Meiji-za in Tokyo and the Naka-za and Kado-za in Osaka. To name a few of the kabuki war plays done at these theaters that were not seen at the stodgy Kabuki-za, *The Manchurian Nation* was staged at the Naka-za in 1932 and *Sailors* in 1933. *All Citizens Are Soldiers*, a revival recommended by the Central Military District Information Office, played at the Meiji-za in 1941. The Kado-za produced *South Sea Blockade* in 1942 and Gōda Toku's early prowar plays *Tosa Naval Squadron* in 1939 and *Spearhead of the Imperial Forces* in 1940.[44] Others could be mentioned.

Some actors were particularly devoted to appearing in new plays (see Figs. 11.5–11.8). Ichikawa Sadanji II was kabuki's most tireless champion of timely scripts for more than three decades until his unexpected death in February 1940. Ichikawa Ennosuke II, long a pioneer of new plays and new dances, inherited Sadanji's mantle as a daring innovator. As we have seen, Ennosuke starred in scores of wartime overnight pickle plays, usually supported by Ichikawa Jukai III, and he organized half a dozen new play (*shinsaku*) programs devoted to previously unstaged scripts.[45] In fact, all major actors, Kōshirō, Sōjūrō, Uzaemon, and Nizaemon, acted in overnight pickle plays in the 1930s and early 1940s. Kichiemon alone stuck to standard roles like Moritsuna and Kumagai and did his best to avoid untried roles (out of nervousness, it is said, not political qualms).[46] Even Nakamura Ganjirō I at the age of seventy-four played the roles of a "modern girl," a *moga*, and a baseball player, in a new dance play in

Fig. 11.5–11.8: Four kabuki actors partial to overnight pickle war plays and new-history dramas are seen in typical roles. Figs. 11.5. *(Above)* Ichikawa Ennosuke II as submarine captain Sakuma keeps a complete log of events in *Submarine No. 6* (1941). (Author's collection)

Fig. 11.6. Sawamura Tosshi VIII is the hard-pressed hero in *Special Agent Kayano* (1932). (Author's collection)

Fig. 11.7. *(Above)* Kawarazaki Chōjūrō IV as General Nogi plans battle strategy (1940). (Author's collection)

Fig. 11.8. *(Right)* Ichikawa Sadanji II is a dapper commanding officer in *Commander Iizuka* (1938). (Author's collection)

1933.[47] In sum, at least 160 productions of newly written war plays show us it was normal for kabuki playwrights, actors, and producers to create plays about the world of the moment and to reinterpret history to meet contemporary ideologies.

War Plays, New Plays — a Long View

During the war, experts advanced differing opinions regarding the value of new kabuki plays. On a fundamental level it was understood that kabuki would cease to be a living art if programs failed to include new plays — *ichiyazuke*, new-history plays, and just plain new plays and dances. "Kabuki without new plays is not kabuki." The author of this comment, in 1938, went on to say, "The appearance of many new plays is natural — it is their absence that would be strange."[48] In the immediate postwar period, readers of the revived *Engekikai* were reminded that "the word 'kabuki' means new drama" and hence even in the present dark time of defeat, new plays must be performed. Actors should follow the examples of the late Ichikawa Danjūrō IX and Onoe Kikugorō V (both actors died in 1903), who "premiered new plays one after the other, garnering praise for their excellent productions."[49]

Onoe Kikugorō VI, writing two years after the war's end, gives us a clear account of the importance of new plays to kabuki during his lifetime:

> An actor's road to success was through new plays. The playwright, working with the producer and the troupe leader (*zagashira*), wrote new plays that showed off the main actors. Because new plays are the mother of kabuki theater, old pieces were not often repeated. . . . A special piece, like one of the "famous eighteen plays" [e.g., *Sukeroku: Flower of Edo*], would not be repeated in ten years, so audiences filled the theater when they were done. A standard like *The Village School* would not be revived in less than three years. If the history piece was a traditional play, then the domestic piece was a new play without fail. Or, if both history and domestic plays were old pieces, the dance play was new. . . . When a program opened, actors and fans were interested only in the new plays. In this way, new works were continuously staged.

According to Atsumi Seitarō, more than a thousand new kabuki plays premiered between 1910 and 1935.[50] Kikugorō VI played in 130 new plays during an acting career that spanned sixty-five years.[51] He also lived in a time of transition, when commercial producers began to schedule old favorites from the repertory as often as two or three times a year.

We may legitimately ask: how good were these plays? Probably most people would agree that only a small number of the new plays written during the war could be of long-term interest or of superior quality. In democracies we are taught that a totalitarian or repressive social system cannot produce good art. But this is more an article of faith than demonstrated fact. There is no doubt that some kabuki war plays were extremely popular with audiences—*Military Packhorse, Tank Commander Nishizumi, Patriotic Military March*, and *Loyal Retainers of the Genroku Era*, to name a few. These works were popular because they expressed ordinary citizens' concerns in a time of national emergency. As George L. Mosse has written of Germany in the same period, "Nazi art and literature was generally popular," paintings "sold rapidly and without any party pressure," and "literature produced under the Third Reich was widely popular" because these works matched "longstanding popular ideals."[52] Similarly, kabuki playwrights were not introducing anything new, that is, surprising or unknown, to audiences. Their "new" plays reiterated standard cultural tropes (group loyalty, racial unity, Japanese Spirit) and validated conventional mores (honesty, perseverance, sacrifice, fortitude, bravery). Most kabuki playwrights believed in Japan's mission of bringing enlightenment and "freedom" to fellow Asians, so we shouldn't imagine that most playwrights felt obliged to write hack work in which they had no personal stake. Scores of dramatists had written fruitfully for commercial kabuki before the war began. Are we to imagine they lost their skill and talent because of the war and a demanding government? Until we have made close readings of all, or most, of the kabuki plays that were written during the war, we can give no definitive answer. But I suggest we have no reason to believe that wartime kabuki scripts were any better or worse than plays written before or after the conflict.

It is true that *ichiyazuke* plays were often hastily written. But this was not a situation unique to the war years. Throughout the world perhaps one play in a hundred lives on after its premiere. One solution proposed for Japan was to "produce new plays abundantly so that some will survive."[53] In the 1930s, a different position was taken by Okamoto Kidō, the doyen of kabuki and modern drama playwriting. He believed that war plays were inconsequential, whatever their numbers. Experience during the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese conflicts showed him that war plays were forgotten after their initial production, and the old repertory continued as before.[54] Finally, Okamoto observed that it was too soon to know if war plays of the 1930s would enter kabuki's "worlds" (*sekai*) of familiar characters and stories. "Let ten or twenty years pass," he advised.[55] Had Japan won the war, we can well imagine kabuki troupes today

reviving such war plays as *Tank Commander Nishizumi, Pearl Harbor,* and *Submarine No. 6*. But Japan lost the war. In the wake of humiliating defeat, producers shunned plays created during the war. And the new American occupiers would not have allowed recent kabuki war plays to reach the stage in any case. The scripts fell into the dark oblivion of kabuki's forgotten wartime history.

PART FOUR

Kabuki Outlasts the Occupation | 1945 – 1947

In act 4 of *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers,* Lord Enya Hangan (Onoe Baikō VII) kills himself (commits seppuku) at the shogun's command. American postwar occupation policy attempted to extirpate themes of feudal loyalty (*giri*) or vengeance (*katakiuchi*) in kabuki. Consequently, *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* was banned from December 1945 until November 1947. (Courtesy Shōchiku)

CHAPTER TWELVE

Inventing Classic Kabuki | 1945–1947

The country died, but kabuki did not die.
—Theater critic Miyake Shūtarō

Steps must speedily be taken to classicize [kabuki].
—Scholar Kawatake Shigetoshi, 1946

When Emperor Hirohito surrendered unconditionally on August 15, 1945, the military struggle between the Japanese Empire and the Allied Powers came to an abrupt end. Japan had "lost" the war, but hostility toward American cultural values continued in many areas of Japanese society, certainly in professional kabuki. A provision of the Potsdam Declaration, which the emperor accepted, brought half a million Allied troops onto the sacred soil of Japan. Postwar planners in Washington specified that the military occupation of Japan should achieve two primary and related sociopolitical goals: (1) to eliminate militarism, ultranationalism, and feudalism from Japanese society; and (2) to promote individual freedom and democratic beliefs among the people. On September 2, General Douglas MacArthur, the Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, accepted Japan's formal surrender. Three weeks later, on September 22, Civil Information and Education Section (CI&E) officials in SCAP (the abbreviation used for both the office and the person of General MacArthur) informed major Japanese film and theater producers that "kabuki plays that are based on feudalistic loyalty and revenge are unwarrantable in the present world." CI&E official David Conde told producers it was their responsibility to stage new kabuki plays with democratic, liberal themes.[1] In late October, Theater Unit officers in CI&E "advised" Shōchiku producers to include 30 percent new plays in commercial theater programs, including kabuki,[2] and in January 1946 they further suggested that 50 percent new plays be staged.[3] These were not goals that the Shōchiku Corporation shared with the Americans. Officials from President Ōtani down expressed their shock and derision, and they fought to overturn, modify, or evade CI&E's advice in every way they could. Yet we can see now that CI&E's suggestions were not exceptional. Setting aside for

a moment the specific percentages, theater officials in CI&E were asking that kabuki programs include new as well as traditional plays, the type of program that had been typical of kabuki for three hundred years.

Specifically, the Americans wanted playwrights to introduce themes of democracy, individualism, and liberalism that had been commonplace in *shingeki* and not unknown in kabuki before the war. Kabuki playwright Kawatake Mokuami had tentatively introduced liberal themes into kabuki in his "cropped-hair plays" (*zangirimono*) written in the Meiji period (1868–1912) about contemporary Japanese society.[4] New plays in the 1910s and 1920s had also expressed liberal themes, but wartime propaganda beginning in the 1930s had thoroughly suppressed the "selfish" ideology of individualism. Some Japanese dubbed the adoption of democratic ideals after the war a "180-degree turn" from militarism to democracy.[5] But for other Japanese it was a "360-degree return" to freedoms experienced in the past.

In 1945–1946, the early postwar years, it should not have been impossible to introduce themes of individualism and democracy into new kabuki plays. The principle was well understood by kabuki artists: in every generation, playwrights introduced into their play scripts thoughts and ideas current at the time. Shōchiku could have asked its stable of experienced playwrights to attribute ideals of freedom of choice and equality to famous Japanese historical figures (as during the war they had anachronistically attributed the spirit of emperor worship to samurai generals). Almost any type of newly written play would have gone far to satisfy American expectations for a revitalized kabuki drama.

During the war, Shōchiku president Ōtani Takejirō had noted that new plays about current events had always been produced in kabuki: "During the Meiji Restoration, kabuki changed. Kabuki had been the modern drama of the Tokugawa period: now the repertory became half traditional, while the other half consisted of realistic plays about the new society."[6] According to Ōtani, then, the normal kabuki repertory in 1941 encompassed both traditional plays and new plays about contemporary life. An examination of the monthly programs at the Kabuki-za, Shōchiku's flagship theater, confirms Ōtani's statement: more than a third of the plays staged there between 1928 and 1942 were premieres or revivals of recent plays. To give one example, the March 1932 program at the Kabuki-za consisted of the premiere of *Three Heroic Human Bombs* followed by two traditional plays, Mokuami's *The Kaga Fire Brigade* and the dance favorite *Kasane*.[7] For the Kabuki-za's 1928 and 1929 seasons, producers chose over 50 percent new plays written in recent years.[8] This is exactly what CI&E requested kabuki producers to continue doing in 1946.

Shōchiku's Policy of Preservation

Why did the kabuki world turn a deaf ear to Occupation advice? Without doubt the main reason (among many) was that President Ōtani and other high officials in the Shōchiku Corporation still believed in the wartime values of sacrifice for the nation and loyalty to the emperor. The war might be over, but Ōtani was able to continue the fight against American values all through the Occupation period. We are fortunate to have President Ōtani's candid enunciation of Shōchiku's kabuki policy, published in the *Mainichi* newspaper four days after the war ended and ten days before the Occupation began. Ōtani feared kabuki would be overwhelmed by an onslaught of American ideas. He declared his sacred duty was to "protect and preserve" the traditions of this great art during the foreign occupation of Japan. At a time when the nation was suffering its greatest humiliation, Ōtani believed a core of Japanese national culture — advocated throughout the war years — could be preserved through traditional kabuki.[9] Therefore, in the months immediately following Japan's surrender — late August, September, October, and November 1945 — Shōchiku producers staged twenty-eight strongly nationalist dramas from the traditional repertory, in line with Ōtani's preservation policy. Among them, *Moritsuna's Battle Camp*, *The Picture Book of Regent Hideyoshi, The Precious Incense and Autumn Flowers of Sendai, Mirror Mountain, The Broken Dish,* and *The Village School* featured bloody scenes of child sacrifice, murder, or revenge (Fig. 12.1).[10] Throughout the war, these plays had been praised for showing the way of the warrior (*bushidō*) and promoting Japanese fighting spirit (*Yamato damashii*). In brief, Shōchiku saw no reason to adjust the repertory to peacetime conditions.[11] The stage was set for American censors to clash with Shōchiku over kabuki production policy. How could the Americans not win, with the authority of the Occupation reigning supreme over Japanese institutions?

The Occupation Bans Three Kabuki Productions

In November 1945, theater officers in CI&E and in the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD) sections of SCAP began to visit kabuki performances in Tokyo and Osaka on a regular basis. They reported to their superiors their shock at encountering two "viciously feudal" history plays in Tokyo theaters. SCAP responded strongly. In early November, CCD theater censor Capt. Charles B. Reese advised Shōchiku officials to withdraw *The Broken Dish* after its month run at the Dai Ichi Gekijō was completed. A week later, CCD theater censor

Fig. 12.1. A postwar production of *The Village School.* Matsuōmaru (Ichikawa Danjūrō XI, right) views the head of his son Kotarō whom Genzō (Onoe Shōroku II, center) has killed as a substitute (*migawari*) for their lord's child, Kanshūsai. Genzo's wife, Tonami (Nakamura Shikan VII), looks on. Because of the play's feudal theme, American Occupation censors banned productions of the play from November 1945 to May 1947. (Courtesy Shōchiku)

First Lt. Victor Ehlers "advised" Shōchiku to close *The Village School* at the Tōkyō Gekijō during its twenty-five-day run (Shōchiku withdrew the production November 21). And in December, Second Lt. Earle Ernst and Second Lt. Joseph Goldstein, new theater censors in CCD, rejected Shōchiku's request to stage *The Subscription List* at the Tōkyō Gekijō.[12] Following up on these rejections, Ernst and Goldstein "hammered away" at Shōchiku officials, insisting that Shōchiku must replace objectionable plays with new democratic themes (Fig. 12.2). Otherwise CCD would "clear the stage for good plays."[13]

How could President Ōtani's policy of maintaining the traditional kabuki repertory be sustained in the face of CCD's power to suppress plays it deemed overly militaristic or feudalistic? At the suggestion of the CI&E Theater Unit head, Naval Lt. John Boruff, Shōchiku developed a list of some five hundred play titles in late November, which Shōchiku divided into traditional kabuki plays (*kabuki geki*) and recent new-history plays (*shin-jidaigeki*).[14] The most striking feature of Shōchiku's play selection was that traditional kabuki plays

Fig. 12.2. American theater censor Second Lt. Earle Ernst stands beside a poster for *Remembrance,* December 1945. Miyata Teruaki's *shingeki* drama addressed the wrenching problems of readjustment faced by Japanese soldiers returning from the war. With little success Ernst urged Shōchiku to commission socially relevant kabuki dramas of a similar nature. (Courtesy Earle Ernst Papers, University Archives, Hamilton Library, University of Hawai'i)

made up only one-third of the list. This suggests that Shōchiku's postwar kabuki programs would include many twentieth-century plays along with traditional pieces. Such programs would have continued the dynamic balance between old and new plays that had always nourished kabuki. And they would have gone far to satisfy the demand of CCD and CI&E for new plays.[15] Shōchiku's subsequent actions, however, belie this easy assumption. Contrary to American desires, Shōchiku producers followed Ōtani's policy and chose mostly traditional pieces (more than 90 percent) during the four years of CCD censorship, 1945 to 1949.[16]

However, the list contained an obstacle for Shōchiku. At Boruff's request, Shōchiku officials rated each play either "possible to perform" (*jōen kanō*) or "not possible to perform" (*jōen fukanō*), based on the play's content. Shōchiku officials rated approximately 180 kabuki and new-history titles possible to perform (we do not know the exact number) because of innocuous content. This would have provided several years of programming acceptable to the Occupation. Unfortunately for Shōchiku producers, many audience favorites they desperately wanted to stage were titles that they, Shōchiku, had just judged militaristic and therefore unsuitable for performance in democratic Japan.

Shōchiku Challenges Occupation Policy

Beginning in January 1946, Shōchiku took a direct approach to the problem: producers began to ask CCD to approve "not possible" kabuki titles. During the four years of Occupation censorship, CCD theater officers approved 140 productions of some sixty extremely popular kabuki plays that were on the "not possible" list. These included *The Broken Dish, The Village School, The Subscription List*, and even *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*.[17] Featured in their stories were numerous scenes of child sacrifice, ritual suicide (seppuku), degradation of women, and revenge, themes that were specifically proscribed under the Occupation's overall antimilitary, antifeudal policy.[18] In brief, Shōchiku refused to accept the American definition of a "democratic" play and, in time, succeeded in gaining Occupation acceptance of most of kabuki's traditional repertory.

How did American censors justify releasing plays with forbidden "feudal" or "militaristic" themes? A clue to the answer can be found in a two-part article, "Kabuki Drama Said in Danger of Falling into Rank Decay," by Professor Kawatake Shigetoshi, published in both Japanese and English in spring 1946. During the war this conservative Waseda University scholar and close adviser to Shōchiku had made the case for national protection of kabuki. Now he

forcefully argued that kabuki was in danger of being polluted and degraded as a result of Japan's destruction in the war (and foreign occupation). "Now is the time for the Kabuki to part company with the populace. . . . By liquidating this contact with the public, it must be classicized with the least delay." In order to prevent "departing from its orthodox way of acting," Kawatake argued, "steps must speedily be taken to classicize [kabuki]."[19]

I suggest the author used "classicize" here as a code word to nullify kabuki's direct participation in wartime propaganda. Kawatake was correct in saying that kabuki was not a classical theater in early 1946. It was necessary to manufacture an "old" kabuki for the sake of the new American censors. An unstated rationale stood behind Kawatake's call for a classic kabuki: if kabuki was said to be divorced from real social concerns — if it was painted as an unchanging and timeless art beyond politics — then plays with overtly feudalistic, militaristic, or nationalistic content could be staged without harm in a new democratic Japan. All traditional kabuki plays, therefore, should be acceptable to Occupation censors. Further, if kabuki was wholly classical, it had no place for new *ichiyazuke* plays about contemporary, postwar life in Japan. This was a breathtakingly bold position, but it was in the interest of the Shōchiku organization to encourage American theater censors to accept this view of kabuki. This proved not hard to do.

American Theories of Censorship

The two most influential theater censors in the Civil Censorship Detachment in Tokyo were Second Lt. Earle Ernst, Theater Subsection head, 1945–1947, and his successor, War Department Civilian Faubion Bowers, Theater Subsection head, 1947–1948. Both came to believe that kabuki plays were safe to perform. But they did so from differing perspectives. Ernst knew that many kabuki plays on Shōchiku's list had undesirable feudal content, but he also believed kabuki was a major international art form. He wrote to his superiors in 1946 that even the most objectionable plays would be "essentially harmless" if they were staged occasionally, performed by star actors, and seen only by sophisticated urban audiences. This was Ernst's so-called special permission policy that allowed censors to approve kabuki's most objectionable plays for a given performance. In September 1946, Shōchiku submitted the script of *Kumagai's Battle Camp* to CCD. Ernst approved this famous play on the grounds that it was a highly artistic work even though he knew it was "feudal as all get out."[20]

Bowers held two seemingly opposite positions on the issue of feudal content. He agreed with those Japanese experts who said that modern kabuki au-

diences were oblivious to ideas (*shisō*) even when violent scenes of sacrifice or revenge were depicted. According to this argument, modern spectators cared only about acting and spectacle. Therefore, it didn't matter if a play had "feudal" content, since the content would not register with the audience. Bowers was fond of pointing out that when the all-day revenge play *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* was performed in November 1947, "not a single Japanese left the theater to wreak vengeance on an American soldier."[21] At other times, Bowers argued that a play like *Kumagai's Battle Camp* had meaning, but its meaning was antifeudal and antimilitary (after slaying his son, Kumagai abandons his lord in wartime, becomes a wandering monk, and prays for his son's salvation). Bowers disapproved of censorship in principle and willingly advanced any argument that would release plays for performance.

Bowers found that if he claimed kabuki was a timeless high art in which content was immaterial, he could circumvent the Occupation's abhorrence of feudalism. In the long run, however, his claim carried ominous implications. You could prove that kabuki was a classic theater only by denying the existence of new plays. Shōchiku producers were eager to erase from memory the embarrassing existence of kabuki's many recent war plays. And to solidify the myth that kabuki was a timeless, "classic" theater, Shōchiku producers shunned any new plays set in the postwar world. Today, sixty years later, everyone knows the results of Shōchiku's policy of preservation in opposition to the Occupation: postwar kabuki became what Professor Kawatake urged, a "classical" theater without relation to people's daily lives and without contemporary overnight pickle plays.[22]

The Legacy of "Classic" Kabuki

One of the enduring myths concerning theater censorship during the occupation of Japan is that when Americans suppressed plays on Shōchiku's list, this posed a mortal danger to kabuki.[23] A statement in 1992 by the then Shōchiku chairman, Nagayama Takeomi, is typical: "In 1945, World War II ended with defeat for Japan, and it can be said that this was the time when Kabuki faced its greatest crisis. The Occupation Forces imposed censorship on feudalistic plays and prohibited the bearing of swords. Thus, performances of nearly all plays in the repertory including *Kanadehon Chūshingura* were forbidden."[24] Nagayama's exaggerated and overdrawn statement casts kabuki, and Shōchiku, in the favored role of victim to an all-powerful American Occupation. Nagayama ignores kabuki's desperate condition before Japan's surrender. By any objective measure, kabuki's darkest hours occurred during the war, when the Japanese

government discarded Grand Kabuki in favor of more populist fare. Nor does Nagayama acknowledge that American censors rapidly released plays they had initially banned.

In the months before Japan's surrender, kabuki had nearly disappeared. Many thought it would expire of its own accord. Young actors Onoe Baikō VII and Nakamura Matagorō II imagined a dark future for themselves in which kabuki had vanished. Baikō considered becoming a businessman, and Matagorō thought he might work as a farmer to earn a living. "It was beyond imagining," Matagorō marveled, "that kabuki could quickly revive. I thought that just as Japan had been utterly destroyed, naturally the traditional arts, too, were wiped out."[25] Critic Miyake Shūtarō called it a miracle: "the country died, but kabuki did not die."[26]

Contrary to all expectations (and contrary to standard accounts), kabuki was able to flourish under four years of American censorship (1945–1949). Nagata Kayano has compiled production figures for those years that show that an average of 256 kabuki plays were staged each year during the American Occupation. By way of contrast, in 1985–1989, an average of 88 kabuki plays were staged per year. This is a decline of two-thirds, even though the 1980s was a time of economic prosperity in Japan.[27] And the Occupation figure is considerably more than the approximately 200 kabuki plays that were staged at major theaters in the glorious year of 1940.[28] The belief that kabuki was "in danger" during the Occupation derives from worries about what might have happened and from feelings of helplessness engendered by foreign occupation. In fact, American censorship actions were quite restrained and as a consequence ineffectual.

The postwar resurrection of kabuki is both remarkable and admirable. Shōchiku successfully followed its own policy of preserving traditional kabuki. It bitterly opposed American Occupation requests, appeals, and demands to add new plays. As a result, the basic nature of the art was altered. Kabuki changed from being a mixed contemporary-traditional theater form to a "classic" form that abjured overnight pickle plays. Orita Kōji, currently the chief kabuki producer at the National Theater of Japan, suggests two reasons that Shōchiku's "no new plays" policy was strongly supported in the kabuki world: "The stars, Kōshirō, Baigyoku, and Kikugorō, were old and not suited to contemporary plays. And it wasn't pleasant for audiences to see their ruined, sad lives dramatized on stage."[29] For fifteen years kabuki audiences had seen stage sets of bomb-shattered Chinese landscapes and rubble-filled Manchurian streets in *Pioneers of Asian Development, Tank Commander Nishizumi, Military Packhorse*, and other *ichiyazuke* war plays. They accepted, perhaps

enjoyed, such scenes because a Japanese hero strode through the conquered landscapes, while the ruined cities were those of the enemy. But now that Japan was the defeated nation, could audiences enjoy gazing at artistic representations of their own catastrophe?

The absence of contemporary plays was a revolutionary development within the kabuki world. Whatever we may think of the war plays written in support of Japan's military adventures, they stand as unflinching proof that kabuki was a living theater in which events of the moment were placed on stage in the 1920s, 1930s, and early 1940s. When, in the late 1930s, playwrights Okamoto Kidō and Ikeda Daigo asked whether kabuki could (or would) change because of the war in China, they asked the wrong question. During the war, and especially in its early years, kabuki was a partner with the government in molding Japanese support for the war. Kabuki did not have to change to do this: its nature was suited to the task.

To a certain extent kabuki had been harnessed to the anti-American propaganda efforts of Japan's wartime administrations. When the war ended, kabuki continued in its favored role of opposition to American ideological goals. The main tool of coercion available to American theater censors, the banning of certain undesirable plays, was reasonably effective in the first year or so of the Occupation. But Shōchiku officials never accepted the ideological basis for the American bans and constantly returned to the traditional repertory for stageable plays. We can say that American theater censors had completely capitulated to Shōchiku by November 1947, when censor Faubion Bowers released for performance at the Tōkyō Gekijō the most notoriously "feudal" of all kabuki plays, *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*. America's propaganda defeat was made complete in mid-1949, when General MacArthur admitted that censorship had outlived its usefulness to Occupation goals. Therefore, on November 1, 1949, he abolished the CCD in entirety. Four years after Japan lost World War II, kabuki "conquered" America. President Ōtani and his followers had outwitted, outmaneuvered, and outlasted Occupation ideology. They were now free to stage "classic" kabuki forever.

Summary

After Japan surrendered, kabuki playwrights and producers might have altered the content of new plays to reflect and articulate the new individualistic, democratic society being instituted under Occupation "guidance." As I have already suggested, this would not have been a strange development. But Shōchiku Corporation officials never abandoned the wartime morality that

they had followed for fifteen years. Shōchiku did not join the brave social revolution in women's rights, landownership, union organization, voting rights, and other areas of Japanese life. With minor exceptions Shōchiku did not commission new kabuki plays to carry a democratic message. It did not offer prizes for the best new kabuki overnight pickle plays about postwar Japan. To the contrary, Ōtani Takejirō resisted American demands in every way. This profoundly conservative stance proved singularly successful. Kabuki-za audiences today cannot imagine seeing plays about modern Japan on that stage, whereas such plays were commonplace before 1945. Today's kabuki audiences are exposed to a constricted repertory of constantly repeated classics: *The Maid of the Dōjō Temple* more than 80 times in recent decades and parts of *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* 250 times. It is said only partly in jest that if you attend the Kabuki-za regularly for three years, you will see the entire kabuki repertory.[30]

We can understand why President Ōtani wanted to stay with the old repertory in 1945 and 1946. Sixty years ago war-dazed citizens found solace in the old warhorses — *The Subscription List, The Village School,* and *Kumagai's Battle Camp* — the *La Bohème*s and the *Rigoletto*s of the traditional kabuki repertory. Audiences were able to escape the numbing reality of Japan's material and moral defeat by entering for a few hours the nation's glorious past. At a time of utter devastation, President Ōtani resolutely guided kabuki along a path of recovery based on a single abiding principle: preserve the core of the traditional repertory. It is possible that kabuki would have withered and died without President Ōtani's persistent commitment. We must be grateful that he and Shōchiku tenaciously supported traditional kabuki.

But a price has been paid by everyone who loves kabuki as a living art. Today young actors in the third postwar generation are taking major roles on the stages of the Kabuki-za, the Minami-za, and the new National Theater. And something vital is missing. Audience members who hope to experience in kabuki something unknown or unexpected, let alone contemporary, must hope in vain. No contemporary plays, and a limited number of new plays of any kind, are staged in kabuki today. Audiences are being denied the excitement, the staggering wonder of the new. Yet newness and originality were central to kabuki for three and a half centuries.

Almost certainly it is a kind of miracle that kabuki survived Japan's Fifteen-Year War. Yet the kabuki that President Ōtani and the Shōchiku Corporation preserved between 1945 and 1949, and the kabuki that audiences have come to love since that time, is not enough. It is only part of true kabuki. In forgetting kabuki's wartime history, the possibility of fresh plays with socially relevant

themes has been denied to the present generation. And that is a grievous loss for true kabuki.

Kabuki in the Twenty-first Century

The Occupation attempted to dominate and hence change kabuki. But kabuki changed only as its Shōchiku managers wished. Kabuki resisted and in the end forced Occupation officials to leave it alone. The American censors came to admire this superlative theater art: kabuki conquered its conquerors. It is no small irony that Japan's defeat in the war, not its victory, prepared the way for the West to sympathetically receive kabuki and other traditional Japanese arts. Peaking in the 1960–1990 period, Grand Kabuki troupes brought "classical" pieces from the repertory to eager audiences throughout the world, touring to the United States, Europe, Latin America, Australia, and Asia. Everywhere Grand Kabuki was met with near hysterical acclaim from critics and spectators alike. Kabuki theater is universally admired in the twenty-first century.

But what if Japan had achieved its war aim of forcing the United States to accept peace in 1943 or 1944 with Japan controlling most of Asia and the Western Pacific? The two countries would have faced each other across the Pacific Ocean as bitter enemies. Their unresolved enmities would have been similar to those that fueled the cold war between American democratic capitalism and Russian communism. We can be certain that kabuki would never have been invited to tour America or Europe under such circumstances. It is not an exaggeration to say that kabuki's postwar international victory was born of Japan's wartime national defeat.

Abbreviations

JT	*Japan Times* (1956 to present). See also *JTA*, *JTM*, and *NT*
JTA	*Japan Times & Advertiser* (1940–1942)
JTM	*Japan Times & Mail* (1918–1940)
KHH	Nagayama Takeomi, ed., *Kabuki-za hyakunen shi, honbun hen, 1* (One-hundred-year history of the Kabuki-za, main volume, 1)
KHS	Nagayama Takeomi, ed., *Kabuki-za hyakunen shi, shiryō hen* (One-hundred-year history of the Kabuki-za, resource volume)
KKNK	Kokuritsu Gekijō Kindai Nenpyō Hensanshitsu, ed.. *Kindai kabuki nenpyō, Kyōto hen* (Chronology of modern kabuki, Kyoto series)
KKNO	Kokuritsu Gekijō Kindai Nenpyō Hensanshitsu, ed.. *Kindai kabuki nenpyō, Ōsaka hen* (Chronology of modern kabuki, Osaka series)
NGESS	Ōzasa Yoshio, *Nihon gendai engeki shi*: *Shōwa senchū hen* (History of modern Japanese theater: Shōwa war years), vols. 1, 2, and 3
NT	*Nippon Times* (1943–1956)
SH	Tanaka Jun'ichirō, *Shōchiku hachijūnen shi* (Shōchiku: An eighty-year history)
SHES	Nagayama Takeomi, ed., *Shōchiku hyakunen shi, engeki shiryō* (One-hundred-year history of Shōchiku, theater sources)
SHH	Nagayama Takeomi, ed., *Shōchiku hyakunen shi, hon shi* (One-hundred-year history of Shōchiku, main history)
SS	Tanaka Jun'ichirō, ed., *Shochiku shichijūnen shi* (Seventy-year history of Shōchiku)

Chapter 1: Prelude to War

1. The Japanese army manual exhorted soldiers to "dash forward," *maishin*, to overwhelm the enemy on both attack and defense. *Maishin* was a basic military doctrine that led to the many hopeless suicide, or "banzai," charges made by outnumbered Japanese soldiers in the Pacific fighting. Brian Daizen Victoria notes that French military doctrine stressing "morale, *esprit de corps*, and aggressive combat" was influential in early Meiji Japan, and therefore the spirit of fanatical attack in *bushidō,* seen in the twentieth century, was an "imposition of indigenous [Japanese] content upon a Western model" (*Zen at War*, 243). During the Fifteen-Year War, the phrase came to be applied to aggressive or fearless action of almost any kind.

2. Plays about current events are also called *kiwamono*, "seasonal goods." I prefer the more pungent term *ichiyazuke* here.

3. *Za* can mean a theater building, as in Minami-za (South Theater), or a theater troupe such as Kokoro-za (Heart Troupe). Another common term for a theater building is *gekijō*, "drama place," as in Teikoku Gekijō (Imperial Theater).

4. The epithet "Tiger of Malaya" is usually applied to General Yamashita Tomoyuki, commander of the Japanese forces that captured Singapore in February 1942.

5. *KKNK*, 10: 683. Reported in detail in the *Bangkok Times*, April 7, 1942.

6. Miyake Shūtarō, *Engeki gojūnen shi*, 384–386.

7. Donald Calman explores nativist theories of Japanese racial and religious superiority that justified Japan's economic and military aggression into Asia (*Nature and Origins*, 53–70).

8. Among many scores of books in English that examine Japan's wartime goals and actions, I have drawn especially on those by Bix, Calman, Coox, Craig, Hayashi, Ienaga, Irie, Iritani, Yomiuri Shinbun War Responsibility Reexamination Committee, and Young (see Sources).

9. Imaya Kyūhei, "Nisshin sensō geki no omoide," 73.

10. *KKNO*, 3: 68–74. The war fever skipped kabuki in Kyoto. Fifteen China war plays were staged in that city between mid-August and late December 1894, none by kabuki troupes (*KKNK*, 3: 48–70).

11. Imaya, "Nisshin sensō geki," 72–74; *KHH*, 85–86; *KHS*, 27–28.

12. "Engeki shashin," 15.

13. Kawatake Shigetoshi, *Nihon engeki zenshi*, 856.

14. Ibid., 856–857, as translated by Donald Keene in his excellent overview of literature and drama during the Sino-Japanese War (*Landscapes and Portraits*, 259–299).

15. Atsumi Seitarō lists fifty-nine new kabuki plays staged in just four years, 1934–1937 ("Daigo shinsaku geki nenpyō," 31–35). Kawatake was well acquainted with these new kabuki plays staged one after the other, but he seems to have preferred the old repertory of traditional plays. We can best view his dismissal of new plays as part of his long-standing campaign to "classicize" kabuki (see Chapter 12).

16. Kawatake aligns himself with those traditionalists who argue that *ichiyazuke* about mid-twentieth-century events cannot be "kabuki" but rather are "modern drama." See, for example, Kiga Kimiko's "Gendai geki to kabuki geki to," where modern drama (*gendai geki*) and kabuki drama (*kabuki geki*) are described as mutually exclusive play types (23). I do not find this distinction persuasive. Historically, "kabuki" has encompassed both traditional and contemporary plays.

17. The production was hugely successful: the Japan Railway Corporation bought up the first ten performances and the stellar cast, headed by Onoe Kikugorō VI, Nakamura Kichiemon I, and Nakamura Utaemon V, played to full houses for a month after that (*KHH*, 157–158).

18. Jitsukawa Enjaku, "Sensō shibai omoide gusa," 22–23.

19. Onoe Kikugorō (VI), "Sensō shibai no omoide," 64.

20. Donald Keene, *Emperor of Japan*, 529.

21. The plays in Kyoto were *Army Reserves and Japan-Russia Hostilities*; *Japan Victorious, Russia Defeated*; *Mobilization Order*; *The Russo-Japanese Incident: Brilliant Morning Sun; The Russo-Japanese War;* and *The Russo-Japanese War at Harbin* (*KKNK*, 4: 273–280).

22. Other kabuki war plays in Osaka in 1904 were *Another Newspaper Extra: The Russo-Japanese War*; *The Challenge at Sea: Japanese Tars and Russian Officers*; *A Chance Meeting on the Battlefield*; *The Glorious Cavalry*; *Japanese Spirit: Rumors of War*; *The Japan-Russia Incident*; *A Military Man: Model of the Japanese Sword*; *Mobilization Order*; *The National Flag: Education for Wartime*; *Reserve Soldiers in the Russo-Japanese Conflict*; *A Soldier's Bereaving Family*; *Tales of the Neighboring Seas*; and *Two Soldiers* (*KKNO*, 4: 157–223).

23. *KKNO*, 4: 167–168.

24. Jitsukawa, "Sensō shibai," 22.

25. Dōmoto Kansei, *Minami-za*, 243.

26. Robert Jay Lifton et al., *Six Lives / Six Deaths*, 60, quoted in Jay Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals*, 223.

27. Komiya Kiichi, *Haiyaku sōran*, 36, 144. Also, *SHES*, 58, 670, 694.

28. Kawatake Shigetoshi et al., eds., *Engeki hyakka daijiten*, 4: 402.

29. "Engeki shashin," 16.

30. *SHES*, 291, 444; *KKNO*, 9: 141.

31. Osanai Kaoru, "Senkan Mikasa," 260–275; *Engei gahō*, December 1937, n.p.

32. *KHS*, 197.

33. Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze, Cherry Blossoms, and Nationalism,* 135.

34. While in Moscow he opened negotiations for Ichikawa Sadanji I's troupe to perform in Russia in 1928.

35. The play received five mentions before opening day in the *Asahi shinbun* (April 3, 5, 7, 11, and 27, 1928).

36. Fujita Hiroshi, *Meiji-za hyōbanki*, 152.

37. *Asahi shinbun*, May 9, 1928.

38. Osanai Kaoru, "Mussolini," act 5: 6–7.

39. Ichikawa Sadanji, *Sadanji geidan*, 199–201; Yano Seiichi, *Miyako shinbun geinō shiryō shūsei*, 106–107.

40. Kodama Ryūichi, "Senchū sengo kabuki nichiroku," 43.

41. Small, non-kabuki troupes produced a second *Mussolini* script at the Kyōto-za in Kyoto (*SHES,* 136) and a third script at the Tokiwa-za in Tokyo in 1928 (*Asahi shinbun*, April 4, 1928). A fourth script, by Maedagawa Koichirō, was published but not performed (Maedagawa Kōichirō, "Mussolini," 276–320).

42. Nakamura Tetsurō, *Kabuki no kindai*, 263–265. Also, Cody Poulton, email correspondence, June 20, 2001.

43. Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "Italian Fascists and National Socialists," 258.

44. Kobayashi Ichizō, *Sengo wa dō naru ka*, 114–115

45. Donald Keene, *Landscapes and Portraits*, 312.

46. Yearly production charts in *KKNO* (vols. 4–8) and *KKNK* (vols. 5–10) show

that the number of active theaters in Osaka fell from 20 to 10, while all types of live performance dropped from 170 to 53 months per year between 1907 and 1937. In Kyoto, the number of theaters went from 10 to 4 and live performances from 92 to 44 months a year over the same period of time.

47. See *KKNO,* vols. 4–8, and *KKNK*, vols. 5–10.

48. *KKNK*, 9: 83; 10: 127.

49. From an open letter Kobayashi Ichizō published in the *Mainichi shinbun* (Osaka), in *Kobayashi Ichizō zenshū*, vol. 6, 215.

50. Quoted in *NGESS* 3: 80–82.

51. Kobayashi Ichizō, "Reimei no jidai," 1–2.

52. Ōtani Takejirō, "Hikan wa sōkei," 6.

53. Ichikawa Ennosuke, *En'ō*, 368–369.

54. Brian Powell, "Communist *Kabuki*," 153–156, provides more detail.

55. Samuel L. Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 305–306. The Kawarazaki-za was the substitute theater (*hikae yagura*) in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries for the Morita-za, the smallest of Edo's three major, licensed kabuki theaters.

56. Powell, "Communist *Kabuki*," 153.

57. Kurabayashi Seiichirō, *Shingeki nendaiki, senzen hen*, 324. To escape police persecution in Japan, in 1938 Sugimoto fled to Russia, where he was shot the following year (Brian Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 108).

58. Faith Bach, "The Contributions of the Omodakaya to Kabuki," 108.

59. Ibid., 107.

60. Ennosuke had led a Spring-Fall Troupe, semi-independent of Shōchiku, between 1920 and 1924. He briefly revived the troupe's name in 1930 and again in 1938–1939 (Bach, "Contributions," 104–106; *Asahi shinbun*, March 7, 1939). Ennosuke was concerned that commercial kabuki's high ticket prices prevented ordinary audiences from seeing kabuki. He planned to sell tickets at half the price of Kabuki-za tickets (*Yomiuri shinbun*, August 16, 1938; Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senzen hen,* 383–384).

61. *SS*, 136; the translation is from Bach ("Contributions," 103).

62. Directed by Hijikata Yoshi, the exciting *shingeki* production played in Tokyo in March and toured to Osaka in April (*KKNO*, 8: 265).

63. Bach provides further details of Ennosuke's return to Shōchiku ("Contributions," 109–111). See also, Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senzen hen*, 378.

64. Sugimura and Itō were powerful performers who became stage and film stars after the war.

65. Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senzen hen,* 499–500; *SHES*, 665.

66. *JTA*, September 21, 1938; Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senzen hen,* 469–470; Kurabayashi Seiichirō, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen,* 275–276.

67. Atsumi Seitarō, "Zoku shinsakugeki nenpyō," 60–75.

68. *KKNO*, 8: 260–261. *The Blue Angel* was staged again in 1935 at the Kabuki-za in Tokyo in a new dramatization by Morita Shigeyori. Ichikawa Jukai III played Professor Unrat and *shinpa* actress Mizutani Yaeko was Lola (*KHS*, 240).

69. *KKNO*, 8: 395.

70. *KKNO*, 8: 275.

71. *KKNO*, 8: 461.

72. Some of the largely independent actors were Ichikawa Kodayū II, Nakamura Gannosuke I, Arashi Kichisaburō VII, Jitsukawa Yaozō III, Jitsukawa Aratarō, Nakamura Fukutarō, and Ichikawa Kudanji.

73. See Powell, "Communist *Kabuki*."

74. Nakamura Umenosuke et al., eds., *Gurafu Zenshin-za*, 10.

75. Bach, "Contributions," 116.

76. Brian Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 86–88.

77. Nakamura Umenosuke et al., *Gurafu Zenshin-za*, 15 and chronology, 2–4.

78. *Yomiuri shinbun*, November 20, 1932.

79. *KKNO*, 8: 505.

80. Nakamura Umenosuke et al., *Gurafu Zenshin-za*, 36 and chronology, 12.

81. A*sahi shinbun*, February 8, 1932.

82. Matsumoto Kappei, *Nihon shakaishugi engeki shi*, 504–505.

83. The complete text of the ordinance is given in Makino Mamoru, *Nihon eiga ken'etsu shi*, 544–558. Rubin gives an excellent description of topics banned under press and publishing laws beginning in the first year of the Meiji era (*Injurious to Public Morals*, 20–26). Theater censorship tended to mimic these laws inasmuch as theater was not governed by a separate theater law enacted by the Diet.

84. Urayama Masao, "Kabuki ni arawareta tennō," 57–59.

85. Leiter, *New Kabuki Encyclopedia*, 171; Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senzen hen*, 562–563; "Kabuki no 20-seiki," 40.

86. *KKNO*, 8: 480–482; *SHES*, 446.

87. Accounts of the confrontation vary somewhat in Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 381; Atsumi Seitarō, "Rokudaime Onoe Kikugorō nenpyō, 2," 38; *KHH*, 466; *KHS*, 292; and *KKNK*, 10: 530. It seems that Kikugorō dropped the troublesome play rather than change the lyrics, which would have meant changing dance movements as well, and did *The Maid of Dōjō Temple*. It seems the censors allowed Kikugorō to play Kisen at the Kabuki-za in March 1939 (*Asahi shinbun*, March 3, 1939).

88. Takeshita Eiichi, *Oka Onitarō den*, 226.

89. Takada Mamoru, "Engeki no Ken'etsu ni tsuite," 32–34.

90. In 1886, the ultranationalist home minister Yamagata Aritomo established a special section, the Higher Police (Kōtō Keisatsu), responsible for political surveillance. In 1911, the unit was renamed the Special Higher Police (Tokubetsu Kōtō Keisatsu, shortened to Tokkō) and expanded in size. Throughout administrative reorganizations in 1925, 1932, and 1941, censorship remained a major responsibility of the Special Higher Police (see Richard H. Mitchell, *Thought Control in Prewar Japan*, 25, 195–196).

91. "Naimushō ken'etsu zumi daihon shirei utsushi," 4.

92. *Tōkyō shinbun*, November 9, 1943; *NGESS*, 3: 264.

93. Haneda Toyokichi, *Gekijō gojūnen*, 27.

94. Nakamura Ganjirō (II), *Nakamura Ganjirō no saigetsu*, 175–177.

95. Kawatake Shigetoshi, ed., *Kabuki meisakushū*, *ge,* 263–265. Rubin describes how publishers replaced problematic words or phrases with XXX or OOO (*fuseji*) on their own initiative to forestall deletions by the censor (*Injurious to Public Morals*, 28–30).

96. *Asahi shinbun*, September 22, 1938.

97. Unpublished play manuscripts "Ichinotani futaba gunki: Kumagai jinya," and "Ōshū adachi ga hara," act 3, *kiri* section (Shōchiku Ōtani Library, Tokyo).

Chapter 2: Kabuki and the Manchurian and Shanghai Incidents

1. *JTM*, September 17 and 29, 1931. It was also called the "Mukden Incident" because the site of the explosion was just outside that city. Among reasons to believe the "incident" had been planned for some time, the *Japan Times & Mail* published, one day after the incident began, a "Supplement" section containing *thirty-two* articles on the Manchurian situation (September 20, 1931). This could not have been done without prior knowledge. For recent analyses of the staged incident and its consequences, see, among others, Takafusa Nakamura, *History of Shōwa Japan*, chaps. 1 and 2, and Yomiuri Shinbun War Responsibility Reexamination Committee, ed., *From Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor*, 52–58. Sandra Wilson points to wide diversity in Japanese responses to the Manchurian crisis and argues that the incident should not be viewed as the first step in the larger war that followed (*The Manchurian Crisis and Japanese Society, 1931–1933*, 6, 291).

2. *SHES*, 663.

3. "Meiji-Taishō-Shōwa shi," n.p. The plan was concocted by Colonel Itagaki Seishirō and Lieutenant Colonel Ishiwara Kanji (see, for example, Hata Ikuhiko, "Continental Expansion, 1905–1941," 294–295, and Herbert Bix, *Hirohito and the Making of Modern Japan*, 235–237). Before the incident, military officers frankly explained to newspaper executives in Tokyo that the army intended to use the incident as a pretext to conquer Manchuria. Editors were cajoled or bullied into publishing false reports of Chinese culpability (Toshio Iritani, *Group Psychology of the Japanese in Wartime*, 29–32).

4. Matsui Shōō, "Manshū jihen," acts 1 and 3.

5. *SHES*, 650; *Engei gahō*, September 1937, n.p.

6. *SHES*, 166; *KKNO*, 8: 309.

7. Kabuki-za, program, April 1932, 27.

8. See Louise Young, *Japan's Total Empire*, 87.

9. Kabuki-za, program, April 1932, 27.

10. For different views of the incident, see Marius B. Jansen, *Japan and China*, 385–388, and Takafusa Nakamura, *A History of Shōwa Japan*, 88–90.

11. For example, see *Asahi shinbun*, February 2, 7, 8, 11, 18, 19, 23, and 27, 1932.

12. *Asahi shinbun*, February 16, 1932; *SHES*, 623.

13. *SHES*, 650.

14. *Asahi shinbun*, March 11, 1932.

15. "Meiji-Taishō-Shōwa shi," n.p.

16. *Asahi shinbun*, March 7, 1932.

17. Tsurumi Shunsuke, *Senjiki Nihon no seishin shi*, 214.

18. *KHS*, 209–217; *KHH*, 385.

19. Komiya Toyotaka, "Shibai no hakai," 4. Komiya's point is that these new plays depart completely from traditional Tokugawa period performing patterns (*kata*). This is an exaggeration since some new scripts were staged using traditional music and acting techniques. And I believe that from a social perspective the plays certainly are "kabuki," for they were created within the kabuki production system: they were written for kabuki performance, staged at kabuki theaters, acted by kabuki actors, and presented to audiences as part of "Grand Kabuki" programs. The issue is often avoided today by calling new scripts "modern drama" (*gendai geki*), according to Kabuki-za Corporation vice president Miyazaki Kyoichi (interview, Tokyo, September 25, 2003).

20. Nakamura Tetsurō is the most recent critic to advance a position. Writing in 2006 about Yoshida Genjirō, he says that this playwright "and others such as Kubota Mantarō, Kawaguchi Matsutarō, and Seto Ei'ichi were deeply conversant with and knowledgeable about kabuki. Further, kabuki actors acted their plays. . . . Nonetheless, we cannot call these men 'kabuki playwrights'" (*Kabuki no kindai*, 271).

21. The quoted speech is from the kabuki script staged at the Meiji-za, broadcast on the radio, and published in the *Asahi shinbun*, March 16, 1932.

22. *Asahi shinbun,* February 24, 25, 26, 28; March 21, 28, 1932, among others.

23. A leading kabuki actor often takes several roles in a play, thus demonstrating his acting versatility.

24. Matsui Shōō, "Nikudan sanyūshi," summarized by Abe Yutaka, 66–67.

25. *Asahi shinbun*, March 13, 1932.

26. *Asahi shinbun*, March 3, 1932.

27. *JTM*, March 6, 1932, 3.

28. *Asahi shinbun*, March 13, 1932. The play is not listed as part of the March program at the Shin Kabuki-za (*SHES*, 650), but the production was reviewed in *Engei gahō*, suggesting that the play was added to the bill at the last moment.

29. Abe Yutaka, "Tokyo kakuza no yūshi geki," 67.

30. Fujino Yoshio, *Misono-za shichijūnen shi*, 264; *SHES*, 844; *Engei gahō*, May 1940, n.p.

31. *Asahi shinbun*, March 5, 1932.

32. The *shinpa* plays were at the Meiji-za in Tokyo, the Kyōto-za in Kyoto, and the Naniwa-za in Osaka.

33. *Asahi shinbun*, March 2, 1932.

34. *SHES*, 139, 293, 582; Shinkokugeki Kiroku Hozonkai, ed., *Shinkokugeki nanajūnen eikō no kiroku,* 392–393; Fujino, *Misono-za*, 264–265.

35. *Asahi shinbun*, April 11, 1932; *SHES*, 50.

36. Yotsubashi Bunraku-za program (April 1932), 67–68. Patricia Pringle kindly brought the *bunraku* production to my attention and provided a copy of the program and script. The production was revived again six years later (Fujita, *Meiji-za*, 218).

37. Ishiwari Matsutarō, "Ningyō jōruri ni kiku 'jikyokumono,'" 42–43.

38. *Asahi shinbun*, March 3, 1932.

39. *SHH*, 66.

40. The film companies were Kawai, Nikkatsu, Shinkō, Tokatsu, Tokiwazu, and Fujita (Peter B. High, *The Imperial Screen*, 36–37; Irie Tokurō et al., eds., *Shinbun shūsei Shōwa shi no shōgen*, 6: 116).

41. *Nippu jiji*, March 22, 1932.

42. *Asahi shinbun*, March 17, 1932. Scott Kramer generously shared his research into the three heroes incident, especially the popular songs celebrating the heroes and information that the event had been fabricated.

43. *Asahi shinbun*, April 6, 1932.

44. *Asahi shinbun*, April 22, 1932.

45. *JTM*, February 27, 1932.

46. Katō Hidetoshi, "Bidan no genkei," 74–75.

47. Ienaga Saburō, *The Pacific War, 1931–1945*, 102.

48. *Asahi shinbun*, February 7, 1932.

49. *KKNO*, 4: 70. For different perspectives on the three heroes, see Mizutani Shikio, *Sanyūshi,* and Takafusa Nakamura, *A History of Shōwa Japan*.

50. From *Taiheiyō sensō shi,* vol. 1, quoted in, Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 6: 106.

51. *Asahi shinbun*, April 2, 1932.

52. *SHES*, 583.

53. Brian Powell, *Kabuki in Modern Japan*, 129–130; *Engei gahō*, September 1937, n.p.; *Asahi shinbun*, February 16, 1932.

54. *KHH*, 402–403. This play, conceived four decades after the Sino-Japanese War, shows Li to be a dignified and intelligent, if defeated, opponent. This accords with Donald Keene's observation that Li received sympathetic treatment in Japan after he was attacked and wounded during the peace talks in Shimonoseki (*Landscapes and Portraits*, 272–273).

55. Ikeda Kaneko, "Kabuki-za no shinsaku futatsu," 51.

56. Arahata Kanson, "Ichikankyaku to shite no fuman," 9–10; Donald Keene, *Dawn to the West*, 434; *KKNO*, 8: 481. Mayama composed at least three overnight pickle war plays. Powell discusses two that Mayama wrote for kabuki, *Now the Battle Begins* and *Major Kuga* (see Powell, *Kabuki*). A third war play, *Ahh, Tsūshū Castle*, was staged by the Inoue Masao *shinpa* troupe at the Meiji-za, September 1937 (*SHES*, 588). In the latter, Mayama takes up the lives of "ordinary Japanese settler-farmers" in China who as a result of the China Incident are refugees in the town of Tsūshū (Tongzhou), with a plot similar to *Now the Battle Begins*. A caption for a photo of the play tells readers that "many Japanese civilians sacrificed their lives resisting the atrocities (*bōgyaku*) committed by Chinese security forces" ("Meiji-Taishō-Shōwa shi," n.p.).

57. *KHH*, 410; *SHES*, 455–456, 584.

58. *SHES*, 666. The play is published in Yoshida Genjirō, *Nijōjō no Kiyomasa*.

59. Yoshida Genjirō, "Nijōjō no Kiyomasa," n.p.

60. *SHES*, index, 145.

61. Yoshida Genjirō, "Urusanjō no Kiyomasa," in *Nijōjō no Kiyomasa*, 266.

62. *KHS*, 232.

63. Nakamura Tetsurō, *Kabuki no kindai*, 270–272; *SHES*, 586-587.

64. *SHES*, 669; Kurumaya Zeskue, "Sadanji no shin kyakuhon," 58.

65. G. T. Shea, *Left Wing Literature in Japan,* 137, 204. KOPF's goals are described in some detail in the English-language *Japan Times & Mail*, September 4, 1932.

66. Thus leftist troupes had created a vibrant system of touring theater a full decade before the Bureau of Information established its touring program, the League of Touring Theaters, in the 1940s.

67. Murayama Tomoyoshi, "Eiga to engeki no ken'etsu," 41–45.

68. Takada Mamoru, "Engeki no ken'etsu ni tsuite," 34.

69. Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senzen hen*, 448–449.

70. *NGESS*, 1: 236.

71. The law is only nine sentences long (the text is published in Okudaira Yasuhiro, ed., *Gendai shi shiryō*, 45: 51), and the nature of the criminal act is defined in a single vague sentence. The law was intended to prevent leftists (and rightists) from criticizing the two pillars of the Meiji constitution: the imperial state (*kokutai*) and a capitalist economy. Later revisions of the Peace Preservation Law (1928, 1933, 1934, 1941) conflated all offenses into the single concept of attempting to alter the *kokutai,* the structure of a sacred and eternal realm justly ruled by a divine emperor (Okudaira, *Gendai shi shiryō*, 45: 114, 197, 204, 277).

72. See Mitchell, *Thought Control*; Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals*; and Patricia G. Steinhoff, *Tenkō: Ideology and Societal Integration in Prewar Japan*, for detailed accounts of the organization of the thought control system.

73. Elise K. Tipton, *The Japanese Police State*, 95.

74. As one example, see the inflammatory story about "red nurses" in a Tokyo hospital, *Asahi shinbun*, April 1, 1932.

75. Shea, *Left Wing Literature in Japan,* 230.

76. Mitchell, *Thought Control*, 119, 146, 196–200; Tipton, *Japanese Police State*, 31; *JTM*, January 20, 1933.

77. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 15: 268 and 8: 384.

78. See Steinhoff, *Tenkō Ideology,* chap. 4; Young, *Japan's Total Empire*, 274–282; Mitchell, *Thought Control*, chaps. 5 and 6; and Rubin, *Injurious to Public Morals*, chap. 3, among others. Pressure to conform was nearly irresistible. When John Dewey was leaving Japan in 1919, his "bleak assessment" was the following: "It takes more force, more moral courage, to be an outspoken critic of the politics and social condition of one's nation, to be a dissenter, in Japan than in any other country in the world" (quoted by Robert Shimada, "The Price Paid," *Japan Times*, November 14, 2005).

79. Tipton, *Japanese Police State*, 112.

80. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 7: 385. No attempt was made to call her conversion a

considered political choice. It rang true that her conversion was prompted by an emotional appeal from an elder brother.

81. *Miyako shinbun*, January 31, 1934.

82. See, for example, the account of his death in Donald Keene, "Japanese Literature and Politics in the 1930s," 226–227.

83. Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 79, 82.

84. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 8: 381. Powell notes that most members of the New Cooperative Theater came from the disbanded Left-Wing/Central Theater Troupe (*Japan's Modern Theatre*, 98).

85. Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 82.

86. *Asahi shinbun*, April 6, 1932.

87. Rubin gives an excellent description of topics banned under press and publishing laws beginning in the first year of Meiji (*Injurious to Public Morals*, 20–26). Theater censorship tended to mimic these laws, inasmuch as theater was not governed by its own theater law.

88. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 8: 176, 324.

89. Okudaira, *Gendai shi shiryō*, 45: 358–360.

90. All examples are from the *Asahi shinbun*, April 6, 1932.

91. Costa Rica, Brazil, Paraguay, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Chile, Venezuela, Hungary, Spain, and Peru also withdrew from the League in the 1930s along with Japan, Italy, and Germany.

Chapter 3: Kabuki and the Marco Polo Bridge Incident

1. *Asahi shinbun*, December 11, 1937.

2. At the large, new Yūshūkan Military Museum attached to Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, six rooms are devoted to a panorama of Japan's Fifteen-Year War. Display captions essentially repeat the government's wartime version of events and give no hint of Japanese military aggression. Japan's motives are exemplary. The rape of Nanking is not mentioned. According to the exhibition, the battle for Nanking was fierce because Chinese troops ignored Japan's humane "warning" to surrender, while afterwards, "inside the city, residents were once again able to live their lives in peace" (exhibit room 10). The reason Japan signed the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy in 1940 was as follows: "It became evident that the United States had intervened in the China Incident" (exhibit room 11). Japan bombed Pearl Harbor when "The U.S. plan to force Japan into war [was] set in motion" (exhibit room 12). Other war incidents occur without a causative agent. As Bix has said of imperial pronouncements concerning the end of the war, the language "implied that the war had been generated spontaneously, like a natural disaster" (*Hirohito*, 509). Captions in the museum make use of passive verbs to avoid Japanese agency and hence responsibility for the war: "The Second Shanghai Incident erupts," "north China becomes a battlefield," and "the Marco Polo Bridge Incident led to further hostilities." The war simply "happens." I often use the passive English form to suggest the

Japanese perspective on events. The overall impression created by the exhibition is of a self-centered, righteous nationalism that is without fault or blemish. Perhaps it is to be expected that a military museum would present a nationalist view of Japan's failed war, yet I was stunned by the assertion, in the year 2007, of the total and absolute moral rightness of Japan's conquests in China and the Pacific.

3. "Meiji-Taishō-Shōwa shi," n.p.

4. After 1937, Japanese variously called the war the China Incident (Shina Jihen), the North China Incident (Hokushi Jihen), the China-Japan Incident (Chūnichi Jihen), and the Japan-China Incident (Nisshi Jihen). For an overview of the war in 1937–1938, see Jansen, *Japan and China*, 392–396, or Bix, *Hirohito*, 317–320. Takafusa Nakamura says it is not known whether Chinese or Japanese forces fired the first shot (*A History of Shōwa Japan*, 141–142).

5. Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 518.

6. See Iritani, *Group Psychology of the Japanese*, 121–126, for details of the mobilization campaign.

7. Joseph P. Sottile, "The Fascist Era," 24.

8. Peter F. Drucker quoted in Sottile, "The Fascist Era," 28.

9. Jonathan Wallace, "Arbeit Macht Frei" entry, "An Auschwitz Alphabet," http://www.spectacle.org/695/ausch.html, accessed August 18, 2007.

10. *Ōsaka jiji shinbun*, October 9, 1937.

11. *Yomiuri shinbun*, September 1, 1937.

12. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 11: 424. Shirai Matsujirō and Ōtani Takejirō were twin brothers who jointly formed the Shōchiku Kabushiki-gaisha. Rising from the poorest of circumstances, between 1910 and 1930 they built Shōchiku into Japan's largest theater and film conglomerate. Company activities encompassed theater ownership and operation; a stable of stage actors, directors, and writers; stage and film production; and film distribution. Shōchiku held virtual monopoly control of kabuki production and competed with the Tōhō Theatrical Corporation for dominance in *shinpa*, young women's musical theater, and popular comedy genres. Shirai, who was company chairman, controlled operations in the Kansai region, while Ōtani, company president, ran the Tokyo operations. Both were remarkably astute and successful conservators of traditional kabuki (see *SHH*, 5–36, for Shōchiku's official history, and Annegret Bergmann, "Kabuki Productions," 166–177, for an outsider's view).

13. *Hōchi shinbun*, August 25, 1937.

14. *KKNK*, 10: 209.

15. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 11: 439.

16. Nakamura Kichiemon, *Kichiemon nikki*, 123.

17. *Hōchi shinbun*, August 25, 1937.

18. *KHH*, 468; Meiji-za, program, March 1938, 2.

19. The term "Grand Kabuki" (*ō-kabuki*) came into general use after the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923. Shōchiku publicists first used the phrase for the "March Grand Kabuki Production" at the Kabuki-za, 1925, the third production after the earthquake-damaged theater had been rebuilt (*KHS*, 145–154).

20. *KHS*, 267; *SHES*, 670; *KHS*, 273.

21. *KKNK,* 10: 198–199.

22. *Hōchi shinbun*, August 25, 1937. The term *ian*, "comfort," is also used for "comfort women" who were forced into military prostitution. There is no connection between the members of touring theater troupes who passed through an area and comfort women who were forced to live for months or years in one location.

23. *NGESS*, 2: 245–246, 249–250. See also Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 115–119.

24. Quoted in Karen A. Fiss, "In Hitler's Salon," 329.

25. Iizuka Tomoichirō, *Shingeki to kyūgeki*, 207. Iizuka's argument was picked up by writers in other genres as well. Three years later, film scriptwriter Sawamura Tsutomu called for a new Citizens' Cinema (*kokumin eiga*) that avoided the class divisions of past eras and was "accessible to all people" (High, *Imperial Screen*, 225).

26. *NGESS,* 2: 248.

27. *NGESS,* 2: 246.

28. *Asahi shinbun*, September 22, 1938; *NGESS,* 2: 250–251. The statement ignores the many proletarian *shingeki* productions staged for audiences of workers and farmers.

29. "Engeki shashin," n.p.

30. *JTA*, August 12, 1937.

31. Kurumaya Zesuke, "Seikachū no Kabuki-za," 19; *KHH*, 461.

32. *KHH*, 462; *SHES*, 173.

33. Hashimoto Yoshio, *Nichigeki rebyū shi*, 34–35; *SHES*, 694.

34. *SHES,* 462; Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 11: 434; Yamato Takeo, "Sensō geki o ura kara miru," 42–43.

35. Yamato, "Sensō geki," 40.

36. Ichikawa Ennosuke, *En'ō*, 393; photo caption in *Engei gahō*, January 1938, n.p.

37. Kawaguchi Matsutarō, "Kanō butaichō saigo no hi," scene 2, 17–25; scene 3, 1–11.

38. *Yomiuri shinbun*, September 9, 1937.

39. *SHES*, 58, 670, 694. All together Mayama wrote five plays about Nogi: *The Last Day of General Nogi, Triumphal Return of General Nogi*, and a series of three plays treating his life in youth, middle age, and old age and death, all under the title *General Nogi* (see also Mayama Seika, *Mayama Seika zenshū*, vol. 13).

40. Mayama, *Mayama Seika zenshū*, 13: 352, 401–403.

41. The single annual Grand Kabuki program in December ran only two weeks instead of the usual three and a half or four weeks. Minor kabuki productions were seen at smaller theaters (*KKNK,* 10: 3, 127).

42. *KKNK,* 10: 199.

43. *Yomiuri shinbun*, September 16, 1937. This was not the only time actors' livelihoods were threatened during the depression years. In 1930, it was rumored Shōchiku would discharge one thousand contracted actors and staff. This did not happen, but Shōchiku cut actors' salaries 20 percent (Yano, *Miyako shinbun*, 218–219, 223). In 1932, the salaries of five hundred kabuki actors in the lower ranks were said to be below the poverty level (*Asahi shinbun*, July 23, 1932).

44. Similarly in Nazi Germany, out of fear of economic loss, theater managers during the depression of the early 1930s "relied on familiar and conservative works in order to attract audiences" (Erik Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, 85–86). See also Michael H. Kater, *The Twisted Muse*, 7–10.

45. Kobayashi Ichizō, *Sengo wa dō naru ka*, 26.

46. General Song Zheyuan commanded the Chinese 29th Army that Japanese forces attacked at Marco Polo Bridge. Presumably he lost his dress sword when his headquarters pulled back.

47. *KHS*, 266. This play and seventy-four others dramatizing major events in Japan's twentieth-century history are featured in a retrospective article, "Meiji-Taishō-Shōwa History through Stage Photographs," published in 1940 in *Engei gahō* ("Meiji-Taishō-Shōwa shi," n.p.).

48. *Engei gahō*, January 1938, n.p.

49. Photo caption, *Engei gahō*, January 1938, n.p.

50. Japanese soldiers carried out reprisals, rape, and murder after the city was taken, acting either individually or on direct or indirect army orders. The number of Chinese killed has been estimated at several thousand or as many as three hundred thousand. David Bergamini (*Japan's Imperial Conspiracy*) and Takemoto/Ohara, using the same basic evidence, draw diametrically opposite conclusions. General Matsui Iwane, army area commander, testified at his war crimes trial that the ideal of Japanese-Chinese brotherhood died at Nanking as a result of "these brutal acts" (Takemoto Tadao and Ohara Yasuo, *The Alleged "Nanking Massacre,"* 60).

51. Editorial, *Engei gahō*, January 1938, 96.

52. *Miyako shinbun,* October 17, 1938.

53. *SHES*, 655, 670, 672; *SHH*, 227. In August 1938, the troupe he was performing with also premiered the war play *A Family of Imperial Loyalists* at the Tōkyō Gekijō and repeated the production in September at the Naka-za (*SHES,* 174, 671).

54. Hagino Genjirō, "Shinsaku no sekai o tazunete," 36.

55. *SHES*, index, 2. In 1939, Ennosuke revived Kawaguchi's play in a sixth production under the title *Three Soldiers* at the Kitano Gekijō in Osaka (*KKNO*, 9: 33).

56. Nakamura Tetsurō discusses Kawaguchi's life and playwriting style but does not mention his wartime plays (*Kabuki no kindai*, 408–416).

57. High, *Imperial Screen*, 204–205*; Miyako shinbun*, October 17, 1938.

58. See Keene, *Dawn to the West,* and Marlene J. Mayo and J. Thomas Rimer, *War, Occupation, and Creativity*.

59. Scripts written for popular knockabout comedians Enoken and Furukawa Roppa often included irreverent military comedy scenes. But they did not oppose the war.

60. *Miyako shinbun,* October 17, 1938.

61. *Engei gahō*, September 1940, n.p.

62. Ernie Pyle was the preeminent "embedded" American journalist of the World War II, living with the ordinary soldiers who were sent into battle. He was killed by a Japanese sniper on Okinawa in 1945.

63. Hosoya Yasutarō, "'Iizuka butaichō,' mita mama," 49–50.

64. *Miyako shinbun*, October 17, 1944.

65. The lines in *The Village School* are spoken after Matsuōmaru's son Kotarō allows himself to be killed by Genzō in place of Lord Sugawara's son Kanshūsai. Matsuōmaru: "Did [Kotarō] not flee or hide?" Genzō: "He smiled brightly." Matsuōmaru: "What, he smiled brightly?" (Toita Yasuji, ed., *Kabuki meisakusen*, 1: 188).

66. Kawaguchi Matsutarō, "Gunba"; *Miyako shinbun*, October 17, 1938.

67. *SHES*, 588, 670; Ienaga, *Pacific War*, 252; *Engei gahō*, April 1938, n.p.

68. Some of the traditional plays of loyalty staged in 1938–1939 were *The Subscription List* (six times); *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* (five times); *Mount Imo and Mount Se*, *The Village School,* and *Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Trees* (twice); *The Broken Dish, Chronicle of the Battle of Ichinotani,* and *Precious Incense and Autumn Flowers of Sendai* (once) (*KHS*, 269–283; *SHES*, 58–61, 174–176, 670–673).

69. Akira Irie, *The Origins of the Second World War in Asia and the Pacific*, 67–68; Iritani, *Group Psychology of the Japanese*, 40–43.

70. Okamoto Kidō, "Jihengo no kabuki geki," 2.

71. Ikeda Daigo wrote the English words in *katakana* as if they were assimilated into Japanese: *amiusumento, shiriyasu, passhon, senchimentarizumu, shinserichii,* and *shupāfisharu* ("Kokumin no shumi shikō no ue no tenkanki," 4).

72. Okamoto died in 1939 and Ikeda in 1942, so neither playwright lived to see kabuki's importance diminish in the last years of the war or the transformation of kabuki into a "classical" theater in postwar years.

73. *SHES*, 671.

74. To cite one important example, on November 15, 1937, the proletarian Social Mass Party (Shakai Taishūtō) "turned from socialism to fascism" in an instant. Members voted at their annual convention to abandon proletarian policies and embrace the imperial state as described in *Fundamental Principles of National Polity* (*Hōchi shinbun*, November 16, 1937; see also Mitchell, *Thought Control*, 139). The school text *Fundamental Principles of National Polity* (*Kokutai no hongi*) was published by the Ministry of Education in May 1937 as the foundation for teaching ethics. It describes the emperor as a living god and details subjects' obligations to him and the nation, including unquestioned obedience to imperial authority. It rejected the "abstract totalitarianisms" of the West, extolled Japanese purity, and, in Bix's words, "It stressed the absolute superiority of the Japanese people and state over all other nations" (*Hirohito*, 313–314).

75. *Asahi shinbun*, September 19, 1937.

76. Ann Waswo, "Translator's Introduction," in Nagatsuka Takashi, *The Soil*, xvi-xvii.

77. *Asahi shinbun*, October 11, 1937.

78. *Yomiuri shinbun*, December 25, 1937.

79. The *Miyako shinbun*, December 25, 1937, quoted in Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 243.

80. *Asahi shinbun* (Osaka), February 6, 1938. For an English translation of the

story *The Song of a Faithful Wife, Ch'un-hyang,* see Richard Rutt and Kim Chong-un, trans., *Virtuous Women*, 236–333.

81. Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki*, *senchū hen,* 254–255.

82. It appears that kabuki artists and administrators fully cooperated with government policies after the China Incident, including Ichikawa Ennosuke II and Kawarasaki Chōjūrō IV, who had tried to do political plays in the early 1930s.

83. Tatsumi Ryūtarō, "Shibai zuihitsu," 54. E. Taylor Atkins relates a similar episode in which popular singer Awaya Noriko was accosted for flaunting kimono and lipstick in public (*Blue Nippon*, 127). Undoubtedly other entertainers faced similar criticism.

Chapter 4: The Darkening Storm

1. *Asahi shinbun*, September 20, 1938; *JTM*, September 10 and 21, 1938.

2. It seems likely that Tōhō president Kobayashi Ichizō used his influence in favor of Tōhō's Takarazuka. Kobayashi was a powerful businessman and twice a cabinet minister. Kobayashi also saw to it that the Nichigeki Dancing Team, another Tōhō troupe, performed at the Golden Gate International Exhibition in San Francisco and the New York World's Fair in 1939 with a pan-Asian program of "Indian, Javanese, Siamese and Chosenese ballets" (*JTM*, September 23, 1938). After September 1934, the weekly feature "On Stage and Silver Screen" in the *Japan Times* carried many brief items about theater.

3. *Miyako shinbun*, March 16, 1939. The dances were versions of kabuki plays *Sanbasō*, *The Mirror Lion*, and *The Maid of Dōjō Temple,* and a colorful folkloric ballet, *Japan's Four Seasons*. Okichi's neighbors in the town of Shimoda cruelly called her "Outsider Okichi." The title of the play, *Tōjin Okichi*, literally means "Outsider (or foreigner) Okichi."

4. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 12: 90.

5. *Yomiuri shinbun*, January 17, 1939.

6. *Miyako shinbun*, March 13, 1939.

7. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei,* 13: 450.

8. The New Cooperative Troupe and the New Tsukiji Troupe were among the major *shingeki* troupes renting the Shinjuku Dai Ichi Gekijō in Tokyo, the Naka-za in Osaka, and the Minami-za in Kyoto (*KKNK*, 10: 287).

9. *KKNK*, 10: 199.

10. Fujino, *Misono-za*, 326.

11. For a brief discussion of Gōda's life and work, see Nakamura Tetsurō, *Kabuki no kindai*, 434–442. Gōda was one of the most active playwrights in the country, contributing some three hundred plays of all types during his lifetime (1905–1966).

12. "New and old" can refer to a program of new and old plays on the same bill or to an acting company in which kabuki actors (old) mix with actors and perhaps actresses from *shinpa* and *shingeki* (new). In the Kansai area, "Combined New and Old" programs were advertised as early as 1903 (*KKNO*, 4: 71, 461).

13. *Engeki gahō*, May 1939, n.p.

14. Kawatake Shigetoshi et al., *Engeki hyakka daijiten*, 4: 20; *KKNO*, 9: 14.

15. *KKNO*, 9: 4, 20, 55.

16. Ōyama Isao, *Kokumin engeki ron*, 366.

17. *KHH*, 490–491.

18. Kawatake Shigetoshi et al., *Engeki hyakka daijiten*, 4: 153; Yamaji Yukinosuke, "Yūraku-za kenbutsu," 44–46.

19. Nakamura Kanzaburō, *Jiden*, vii–ix;

20. Photograph in *Engei gahō*, January 1938, n.p.

21. Takenaka Sōkichi, "Tōhō gekidan o miru," 29; Fukano Bunji, "Geijutsu-za, Tōhō gekidan no gōdōgeki," 90.

22. *Hōchi shinbun*, September 7, 1937.

23. *KKNK*, 10: 286, 307.

24. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei,* 12: 406. There are striking parallels with the Tokugawa government's disapproval of women's kabuki in the early 1600s: women are the vehicles of corruption, the daring new fashions are damned for their Western origin, sartorial self-expression in public is labeled antisocial, frivolity of ordinary townspeople is invidiously compared to iron self-control, which, of course, is a male military virtue. Even the terms are similar: Okuni and her female dancers exhibited "deviant" or "perverted" (*kabuku*) fashion; young women on the Ginza in 1938 dressed in "imbecilic style."

25. *Asahi shinbun,* September 20, 1938; *KKNK*, 10: 307.

26. *KKNK*, 10: 308.

27. *KKNO*, 9: 53.

28. Nakamura Kan'emon, *Gekidan gojūnen*, 212.

29. *Miyako shinbun,* February 25, 1939; *KKNK*, 10: 327-328.

30. The priest Musashibō Benkei beats his master Minamoto Yoshitsune as a ruse to show their traveling group is of no importance. To the guards it is inconceivable that a retainer would strike his master, and so the guards allow Yoshitsune's group to pass.

31. *Miyako shinbun,* March 13, 1939.

32. *The Subscription List*, as translated by James R. Brandon and Tamako Niwa, 220.

33. Nakamura Kan'emon, *Gekidan gojūnen*, 212.

34. The scripts for all live theater performances were subject to censorship, from kabuki, *shingeki,* and light comedy (*kigeki*), to sung epics (*rōkyoku*) and comic vaudeville duos (*manzai*). See *Asahi shinbun,* May 3, 1939.

35. *Asahi shinbun*, March 7 and 11, 1932; March 8, 1939; and April 3, 1942.

36. *Asahi shinbun*, March 5, 1932.

37. *Miyako shinbun,* August 27, 1937.

38. The Film Law, formulated over several years, was issued by the Home Ministry in April 1939 and put into effect October 1 of that year. Its scope was total, authorizing government agencies to "order films shown, order films made, license workers, [inspect] scenarios, [and] regulate quality of copies" (Mitchell, *Thought Control,*

301–302). See also, Kido Shirō, *Nihon eiga den*, 182–183; and Gregory J. Kasza, *The State and the Mass Media in Japan, 1918–1945*, chap. 8.

39. *Asahi shinbun,* March 31, 1939; *NGESS,* 1: 244.

40. Twenty-five years passed before the first national theaters (*kokuritsu gekijō*) were funded from the national budget. In autumn 1966, a national theater for kabuki and a national theater for *bunraku* opened in Tokyo. Subsequently national theaters were built in Osaka for *bunraku* (1984); in Tokyo for traditional *rakugo* and *kōdan* storytelling (1979), nō and *kyōgen* (1983), and opera and *shingeki* (1997); and in Naha for Okinawan performing arts (2004).

41. Ōyama Isao "Engeki ni okeru Nihon shugi," 19–20.

42. Ōyama Isao, *Kokumin engeki ron*, 294.

43. Ibid., 297.

44. See Thomas R. H. Havens, *Valley of Darkness*, for a comprehensive overview of the effects of the war on the civilian population of Japan, 1937–1945.

45. *Miyako shinbun,* March 31, 1938.

46. *Tōkyō shinbun,* May 12, 1938.

47. *KKNK*, 10: 393–394.

48. *KKNK*, 10: 403.

49. *KHS*, 280.

50. *KKNK*, 10: 427.

51. *KKNK*, 10: 440.

52. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 13: 259.

Chapter 5: Kabuki and 2,600 Years of Imperial Rule

1. Takafusa Nakamura translates the term New Political Order (*History of Shōwa Japan*, 164). Young identifies key players in the Shōwa Research Association as "Marxist-informed . . . radical intellectuals" whose interest was remaking the political system and "restructuring . . . capitalism" (*Japan's Total Empire*, 223). William Miles Fletcher III notes the association soon dissolved, and important leftists and Marxists in government employ were arrested in April 1941 "on charges of trying to effect socialism under the guise of national defense policies." Fletcher says these events mark "the demise of radical economic reforms within the New Order Movement" (*The Search for a New Order,* 153). Anticapitalist attacks on kabuki, however, did not abate after 1940. If anything, they increased.

2. Quoted in Fletcher, *Search for a New Order,* 141.

3. Takafusa Nakamura describes fierce, never resolved disagreements over the organization and function of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association that raged within planning groups in late 1939 (*History of Shōwa Japan*, 161–166). Similarly, Fletcher argues that strong opposition from political and economic interests forced Konoe to water down the original radical plan that would have wholly supplanted the Diet and political parties with the New Order system. In his view, the weakened New Order that was enacted failed to accomplish Konoe's purpose. The Imperial

Rule Assistance Association never became the all-powerful national party that Konoe intended, and "the disappearance of political parties" did not reduce Diet members' voting power within the Diet (*Search for a New Order,* 151). Nonetheless, socially and culturally the New Order Movement was a powerful force that no one in the theater world dared to challenge directly. It set a course that theater artists and management had to reckon with from 1940 until the end of the war. For the effect of the movement on filmmaking, see High, *Imperial Screen,* 288–289.

4. For details see Iritani, *Group Psychology of the Japanese*, 127–129 and Gordon M. Berger, "Politics and Mobilization in Japan, 1931–1945," 145–148.

5. Quoted in Robert Smith Thompson, *Empires on the Pacific,* 87.

6. Bix, *Hirohito*, 383.

7. Albrecht Fürst von Urach, *The Secret of Japan's Strength.*

8. High, *Imperial Screen*, 297.

9. Nakamura Takafusa, *History of Shōwa Japan*, 164, 171.

10. Bix, *Hirohito*, 383.

11. *Engei gahō,* March 1940, n.p.

12. Oka Onitarō, "Waga ōya shima," 36.

13. *NT*, February 11, 1943.

14. The regulations also asserted price controls over essential goods such as clothing (Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 14: 309).

15. Ibid., 14: 308; *KHH*, 510.

16. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 14: 308.

17. Ibid., 14: 396, 404.

18. *KHH*, 510. The rumor remained just a rumor; kabuki actors were not singled out for investigation.

19. Onoe Shōroku, "Senchi to naichi," 76.

20. Also written "Nomonhan." See Alvin D. Coox, *Nomonhan*, for a meticulous dissection of Japan's military failure.

21. Kataoka Ichizō, "Sansen no kensō," 77.

22. Nakamura Moshio, "Kangaete imasu . . . ," 79.

23. Bandō Minosuke, "Mōko sanjūroku nichi no tabi," 66–69. Apparently Mitsugorō was not able to carry out his youthful promise to return with backpack.

24. "Nihon seishin kyōchō kokushi geki zenshu," n.p.

25. See monthly Kabuki-za programs during 1940.

26. *Engei gahō*, March 1940, n.p.; *KKNK*, 10: 456.

27. *KKNO*, 9: 69.

28. *KKNK*, 10: 537.

29. *KKNO*, 9: 103.

30. Kabuki-za, program, October 1940, 9. It was a claim that one critic found farfetched (*KHH*, 514).

31. Ōyama, *Kokumin engeki ron*, 320–321.

32. *KHS*, 284, 287, 292.

33. Nagata's was the third kabuki script of that title to be staged (*SHES*, 467).

Three years before, Kansai actors at the Ōsaka Kabuki-za appeared in *An Enemy Nation Surrenders*, written by Ōnishi Kikumi (*SHES*, 374). And even earlier at the Meiji-za, Ichikawa Sadanji II and his troupe performed Matsui Shōō's *An Enemy Nation Surrenders: Extermination of the Mongols*. A minor role in the play, Marco Polo, "an Italian," was played by Sawamura Tosshi VIII. This is a rare instance of a Caucasian role in a kabuki play (Matsui Shōō, *Tekikoku kōfuku, mōko taiji*).

34. *JTM,* November 6, 1940.

35. Hirata Kōichi, "Hakodate Karinsen Ki," 22–23. The script was published in *Engei gahō*, March 1940, prefaced with the comment "staged at a major Shōchiku theater." It is unclear where the play was produced.

36. *Mainichi shinbun* (Osaka), December 28, 1939.

37. The nonspeaking roles of European and American envoys were taken by Rapucheff, Yakubenko, Dorugoff, Petroff, and Popoff (phonetic spellings), who were perhaps Russian sailors or businessmen living or stationed in Osaka (*KKNO*, 9: 63–64; *KKNK* 10: 456).

38. *KKNO*, 9: 82; *Mainichi shinbun* (Osaka), April 28, 1940.

39. *KKNO*, 9: 113–115. Sometimes subtitled *Fight without Quarter* (*Uchiteshi yaman*).

40. According to the Japanese government, the "ABCD powers," America, Britain, China, and the Dutch, were encircling Japan in 1940–1941 with an economic embargo, military aid to China, and strengthened Allied bases in the Pacific (for example, see Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 16: 378).

41. Gōda Toku, *Kokumin kaihei,* 37–38.

42. *SHES*, index 76.

43. Kitabayashi Yoshiko, "'Kokumin kaihei' o miru," 39–40.

44. Manchukuo or Manshū in Japanese.

45. Japanese propagandists used the phrase "paradise of benevolent rule" (*ōdō rakudo*) in the 1930s to describe the supposed benefits to Manchuria of Japanese rule. See, for example, Coox, *Nomohan*, 20–23.

46. Kabuki-za, program, August 1940, 7–9; *Engei gahō*, September 1940, n.p.

47. *NGESS*, 3: 208.

48. The woman whom Japanese film executives presented to the public as the Manchurian actress Ri Koran (Li Xianglan) was actually Yamaguchi Yoshiko, a Japanese citizen born in Manchuria of Japanese parents (*JTA*, February 24, 1941). She was also known as Shirley Yamaguchi after the war. For an insightful discussion of the "insanity" and "hysterical proportions" of her success with Japanese audiences in 1940, see High, *Imperial Screen*, 271–280.

49. Ikeda Daigo, "Kabuki-za no hachigatsu," 6.

50. *Engei gahō*, February 1940, n.p. The script was based in part on a highly acclaimed Nikkatsu film of the same title released in December 1937 (Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 11: 570).

51. As we have seen, Gōda Toku's play of the same title, subtitled *Warrior God,* was written and produced the previous year (*KHES*, 271; *KKNO*, 9: 20).

52. To a certain extent the Japanese military "embedded" its media visitors in specific units, with the expectation that the embedded writer or painter would develop a sympathetic bond with the fighting men around him. This is similar to U.S. Army practice during the second Iraq war. One seductive appeal of the program was that, as an official statement put it, "participation in the plan meant for the authors also a participation in national policy" (*JTA,* May 4, 1942).

53. An English version of Kikuchi's script was published in 1942 (*JTA,* May 30, 1942).

54. *Engei gahō*, September 1940, n.p. The rape of Nanking is acknowledged by Ōzasa Yoshio in his brief chronology of events: "December 13, the Japanese army occupies Nanking. An incident of a great massacre occurs" (*NGESS,* 1: 204).

55. Two kabuki scripts have the same title. A year before Kikuchi's play, Osaka playwright Gōda Toku wrote *Tank Commander Nishizumi* for Kansai kabuki actors at the Kado-za, April 1939, with Ichikawa Kodayū II playing Commander Nishizumi (*KKNO,* 9: 20). A film version of the story, *Legend of Tank Commander Nishizumi*, produced by Shōchiku in 1940, includes battle scenes "incomparably more ferocious and bloody" than such scenes in previous films (High, *Imperial Screen*, 213).

56. Kōga Saburō, "Kōa no senkusha," 17.

57. Ibid., 16.

58. Ibid., 17.

59. Rokuda Kōji, "Naka-za no shinkyū gōdōgeki," 59–61.

60. *Mainichi shinbun* (Osaka), October 9, 1940.

61. See *NGESS,* 2: 220–221 and 241–242 for details.

62. *Yomiuri shinbun,* October 16, 1940.

63. Mitchell says that military officers dominated the Bureau of Information (*Thought Control*, 281). A count of department and section heads at the time the bureau was formed does not support this view: civilian officials of the Home Ministry and Board of Information combined held fourteen positions while the army and navy ministries together held nine positions. In 1940, no department or section head within the fourth division, Censorship, or the fifth division, Cultural Guidance, was a military officer (see chart in Uchikawa, *Gendai shi*, 41: 316). The military ministries seem to have gained greater influence after May 1945, when the bureau was reorganized to "unify reporting of military, political, and foreign news" (*Asahi shinbun,* May 13, 1945).

64. As Barak Kushner writes, in Japan "no single authority reigned over the entire propaganda apparatus the way Hitler and Goebbels ruled at the top of the Nazi propaganda pyramid" (*Thought War*, 6).

65. Within the bureau's fourth division (Censorship), the first section (Censorship) was responsible for "censorship and other control of publishing, including newspapers and magazines" and "censorship and other control of phonograph recordings, film, theater, and light entertainment" (from organization chart in Uchikawa, *Gendai shi*, 41: 315). Thus both the bureau and the Home Ministry held "cultural

guidance" and "censorship" authority. This overlap does not seem to have caused significant problems. In practice, the bureau took the lead in giving positive propaganda guidance for future theater work, while the Special Higher Police handled most play censorship. By coincidence, theater censorship in postwar Japan under the American Occupation was similarly divided: the Civil Information and Education Section (CI&E) carried out democratic guidance of content, a positive function, while the Civil Censorship Detachment (CCD) suppressed militaristic and undemocratic themes, a negative function (see James R. Brandon, "Myth and Reality," 9–17, and Marlene J. Mayo, "To Be or Not to Be," 270–271).

66. High, *Imperial Screen*, 62–63.

67. Okudaira Yasuhiro, "Political Censorship in Japan from 1931 to 1945," 27.

68. "Shinkyō, Shin Tsukiji, ryōgekidan kaisan," 66.

69. Interestingly, Kimura blamed Shōchiku for the fact that modern audiences ignored plot. Because Shōchiku producers so often staged selected scenes from long plays, it was impossible for audiences to follow the original, full plot. (Imagine a program on Broadway made up of acts 3 and 5 of *Hamlet,* followed by Chekhov's one-act *The Marriage Proposal,* followed by act 2 of *Streetcar Named Desire*.) Kimura argued that if full plays (*tōshi kyōgen*) were staged, then audiences would be engrossed in the unfolding of plot (Kimura Kinka, "Shintaiseika no jōen kyakuhon ni tsuite," 2–3). A different explanation was advanced by Osanai Kaoru twenty years earlier: Osanai believed kabuki should be a mass art, performed in many small theaters where new materials were brought constantly onto the stage. New plays were important to Osanai. But with Shōchiku's commercialization of large theaters, the opposite happened: play content became marginalized and star quality acting drew audiences (see Kan Takayuki, *Zōho*, 21–23).

70. Two Western-style theaters were built before the Teikoku Gekijō. The Yūraku-za in Tokyo (1908) and Kawatake Otojirō's Teikoku-za in Osaka (1910) brought row seating, the proscenium arch, and electric lighting to Japan. The Yūraku-za continued to be used, mostly for *shingeki*, for half a century. The Teikoku-za closed around 1916, unable to draw audiences after Kawakami's death in 1911. I want to thank Samuel L. Leiter for pointing out the existence of these two early modern theaters. See *KHH,* 237; *KKNO*, 5:146; and *Engei gahō*, November 1911, 163, and December 1911, 165–166.

71. The scheduled programs of *shinkokugeki* in September and *shinpa* in October were cancelled. Important kabuki actors under contract to the theater, Matsumoto Kōshirō VII, Sawamura Sōjūrō VII, and Morita Kanya XIV, had to find positions with other theaters ("Teikoku Gekijō no kaishō," 65).

72. Miyake Saburō, "Inpon geki no hitotsu," 14–19.

73. *NGESS*: 1: 246–247.

74. *SHH*, 236. Others sought to create Citizens' Movies, Citizens' Songs, Citizens' Art, Citizens' Culture, and so forth. These movements were philosophically part of a larger government initiative coordinated by the Central League of Japanese Culture, whose mission was "culture creation" that balanced "Yamato culture and

Western civilization." Iizuka's pursuit of a purely Japanese drama was extreme. His counterparts in music and dance were more inclined to accept Western influences than he (see *NT,* July 22, 1942).

75. *NGESS,* 2: 245–250.

76. See *NGESS,* 2: 252–255.

77. Fuwa Suketoshi, "Engeki hō shimon daiichi go tōshin'an," 3. High gives interesting details of Fuwa's career as a "reform bureaucrat" inspired by "visions of a totalitarian utopia" who believed that under proper administrative guidance "culture and art were endlessly perfectible" (*Imperial Screen*, 72–75, 86, 90).

78. This is my reconstruction of the event based on accounts in Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 14: 399; Kodama, *Senchū sengo*, 44; *NGESS,* 3: 215; *SHH,* 233; *SS*, 155–156; and *KKNK*, 10: 477, 504.

79. At that time major urban areas were served by eight large troupes of professional kabuki actors (and smaller troupes as well), two or three *shinpa* troupes, a single *shinkokugeki* troupe, and several dozen women's sword drama, family drama, and comedy troupes. In part because *shingeki* actors were considered amateurs, performers of modern drama were not included in the association.

80. Kishida, a leading member of *shingeki*'s liberal and humanist wing, rushed home from Manchuria, where he was traveling as a state guest, in order to accept his appointment to this hard-line fascist organization. Ōzasa says that Kishida directed the Cultural Division of the association for nearly five years, from November 1940 until the end of the war (*NGESS,* 2: 205-213). Ibaraki Tadashi says Kishida resigned as cultural head after a year and a half, in June 1942, and that within the "military tyranny," Kishida was a liberal "breakwater against cultural regimentation" (*bunka tōsei no bōhatei*) (*Nihon shingeki shōshi*, 100). J. Thomas Rimer discusses in some detail what Kishida wrote after traveling to China as a Pen Brigade member in 1937 and 1938 ("Paris in Nanjing," 176–187).

81. Translated in William G. Beasley, *Select Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, 1853–1868*, 167–168.

82. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 14: 452–453.

83. Kodama, "Senchū sengo," 47.

84. *NGESS,* 1: 244.

85. The report of the committee is printed in full in Nihon Engeki Kyōkai, ed., *Engeki nenkan, Shōwa jūhachinen han*, 267–271, and in Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 375–381.

86. Makino believes the committee was at fault: the proposals were too sketchy to be enacted into law (*Nihon eiga,* 481). Committee member Miyake Shūtarō says Ministry of Education officials halted publication of their report without saying why (*Engeki gojūnen shi*, 395). There may also have been a turf fight between the home and education ministries over who would have theater control.

87. The police regulation is printed in full in Nihon Engeki Kyōkai, *Engeki nenkan*, 271–289. See also, *KHS*, 285, 286; *NGESS,* 1: 245.

88. On the basis of article 100, late-nineteenth-century kabuki plays glorify-

ing robbers, murderers, and blackmailers were carefully examined and many, like *Benten the Thief*, *The Country Samurai,* and *The Execution Ground at Suzugamori,* were banned or ordered rewritten.

89. Kabuki-za advertisement in *Asahi shinbun*, March 3, 1939.

90. Examples of long programs at the Kabuki-za are nine plays, November 1936; eight plays, May 1936; and seven plays, April 1935 (*KHS*, 242, 251, 256). Managers at the Minami-za put on a program of eleven plays in 1935, which may be a record (Minami-za, program, December 1935, 1). Programs of different lengths were tried during the 1930s, and it was not exceptional to begin performance at 7:30 or 8:00 a.m. and conclude a few hours before midnight.

91. Oyama Sōkai, "Tanjikan kabuki," 30.

92. "Kinji henpen," 2. After the war and under American Occupation censorship, many of the same Japanese experts produced a list of kabuki plays that they judged to be "impossible for performance" (*jōen fukanō*) according to democratic criteria (for details, see Brandon, "Myth and Reality"). Naturally the wartime list and the postwar list contain almost no plays in common.

93. It seems surprising that after the war Terasawa continued to be an accepted public commentator on theater.

94. *KKNK*, 10: 508.

95. Uchikawa, *Gendai shi*, 41: 315.

96. *KHH*, 514; *KHS*, 283.

97. *KHH*, 514.

98. *SHES*, 674 and index, 135.

99. *Asahi shinbun,* September 26, 1940.

100. Kushner, *Thought War*, 19. Emphasis in original.

101. *Yomiuri shinbun,* September 14, 1940.

102. *KHS*, 289.

103. "Kinji henpen," 2.

104. *KKNK*, 10: 403.

105. *JTA*, December 31, 1941.

106. Kodama, "Senchū sengo," 44.

107. *JTM*, November 6, 1940; *KHS*, 291.

108. *KHS*, 291.

109. Kodama, "Senchū sengo," 47.

110. Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 385.

111. *KKNO*, 9: 111.

112. *NGESS,* 3: 206.

113. *NGESS,* 1: 247.

114. Quoted in *NGESS*, 2: 246.

115. The Kabuki-za was the site, on July 30, 1905, of a fervid rally at which a parade of nationalist speakers denounced the concessions that Western powers were forcing on Japan (Sandra Wilson, "The Russo-Japanese War and Japan," 178).

116. Fujimori Nariyoshi, "Nisshin gaikō," 23.

117. Nakamura Umenosuke et al., *Gurafu Zenshin-za*, 43; Nakamura Kan'emon, *Gekidan gojūnen*, 224–225.

118. *KKNK*, 10: 522; Nakamura Umenosuke, et al., *Gurafu Zenshin-za*, chronology, 13; Powell, "Communist *Kabuki*," 161.

119. High describes one of the films, *Ōhinata Village* (*Ōhinata mura*, 1940), that the troupe made with Tōhō. Kawarazaki Chōjūrō played the leading role of a town elder who returns from an inspection tour of Manchuria. "With the beatific smile and burning eyes of a religious convert," he contrasts the richness of the "open land" in Manchuria to the bleak poverty of Ōhinata: "Cramped in its dark, dusky mountain valley, the village is being suffocated by overpopulation." He urges half of the village to resettle in Manchuria (*Imperial Screen*, 269–270).

120. See Nakamura Umenosuke et al., *Gurafu Zenshin-za*.

121. *SS*, 329; Yotsubashi, n.p.

122. Wanya Shoten widely advertised the collection in monthly issues of *Kanze* and *Hōshō* magazines during 1940 and 1941 (for example, *Hōshō* 20, 9 [September 1941]: n.p.).

123. Ienaga Saburō, *Sarugaku-nō no shisōshiteki kōsatsu*, 16–25.

124. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 3: 83; *KHH*, 351–352.

125. *JTM,* November 10, 1940.

126. See Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 79–82, 96–101. Ozaki Hirotsugu lists thirteen *shingeki* troupes founded in the period 1929–1938, most of them leftist oriented: Shin Tsukiji Gekidan, Gekidan Tsukiji Shōgekijō, Gekidan Shin Tōkyō, Teatoru Komedi, Tsukiji-za, Tōkyō Engeki Shūdan, Shin Gekijō, Sōsaku-za, Bijutsu-za, Kinyōkai, Shinkyō Gekidan, Geijutsu Shōgekijō, and Bungaku-za (*Shingeki no ashioto*, 143–144).

127. See Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 362–363.

128. Ibaraki, *Nihon shingeki shōshi*, 91.

129. Nakamura Tetsurō, *Kabuki no kindai*, 331, 334; *SHES*, 673.

130. We do not know if Susukida and Nagata wrote the statements or if they signed statements prepared by the police.

131. "Shinkyō," 66. The many published accounts of this event differ slightly in details (see Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre,* 109–113, and Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 364–366).

132. Among those arrested were Nagata Hideo, Murayama Tomoyoshi, Senda Koreya, and Akita Ujaku of the New Cooperative Troupe, and Susukida Kenji, Ishiguro Tatsuya, and Ikeda Shōji of the New Tsukiji Troupe ("Shinkyō," 67).

133. *KKNK*, 10: 512.

134. See *NT,* October 3, 9, 10, and 18, 1945. Mitchell suggests that torture was the exceptional practice (*Thought Control*, 101–103). Rubin says that torture by Yokohama police of forty-nine journal editors and writers arrested in 1944 and 1945 for leftist inclinations was regular and systematic and not an aberration. The torture in Yokohama was so brutal three detainees died (*Injurious to Public Morals*, 267–270).

135. Konoe, quoted in Fletcher, *Search for a New Order*, 147.

136. *KKNK*, 10: 516.

137. Fujisawa Chikao, "The Way of the Gods," 4.

138. Mitchell, *Thought Control*, 140–141.

139. One can wonder why police did not apprehend or even question anyone within the kabuki theatrical world during the leftist roundups of 1940 and earlier. The network of commercial kabuki management was profoundly conservative, and yet artists held a variety of political positions that were not necessarily secret. As we have seen, kabuki actors Kawarazaki Chōjūrō IV and Kawarazaki Kunitarō V, who joined the Communist Party after the war, and Ichikawa Ennosuke II were openly populist and anticapitalist in the 1930s. They starred in progressive plays that certainly irked the police. Kaneko Yōbun, playwright of four nationalist, pro-military kabuki plays that are discussed here, was well known as a proletarian author. He also edited the proletarian literary journal *Tanemaku hito* (The Sower) before the war, and after the war he was elected to the Diet on the Socialist Party ticket (see Shea, *Left Wing Literature in Japan*, 94–98, 125, 129). Kasza notes that police censors also closely monitored ultra rightist propaganda in newspapers and magazines, banning "pure Japanist" and "national socialist" calls for revolution and the end of capitalism (*State and Mass Media*, 140–143).We can speculate that the degree of forbidden political thought, left or right, within the larger kabuki world was too slight to catch the attention of the Thought Police at a time when the jails were already full of opponents of capitalism and the emperor system.

140. High, *Imperial Screen*, xiv–xv.

141. Kan Takayuki, *Sengo engeki, shingeki wa norikoerareta ka*, 38–41.

142. Nagata Hideo, "Shintaiseika no engeki," 40.

143. Nagata was arrested August 19, and his article appeared in the September issue of *Engei gahō* that was printed on August 25 (see page 80). He must have written his New Order manuscript in the six days following his arrest.

144. Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen,* 375; *JTA*, May 14, 1942. Senda Koreya, one of those arrested, was even permitted in 1944 to organize a new *shingeki* troupe, the Actors' Theater (Haiyū-za), devoted to nonrealistic staging (*NGESS,* 2: 216–222). Playwright Kikuta Kazuo recalls that he personally asked Tokyo theater censor Terasawa Takanobu to allow "M," a former member of the New Cooperative Troupe, to work in the Tōhō Number Two Theater Troupe: "Terasawa agreed because 'M' had no other way to earn a living" (Kikuta, *Shibai tsukuri yonjūnen*, 266–267).

145. Nagata Hideo, "Gekidan no sōshikika," 6.

146. Nagata Hideo, "Jōhōkyoku kokumin engeki," 2.

147. See Faubion Bowers, "The Reminiscences of Faubion Bowers" and "Japan, 1940–1949."

148. Perhaps it was because Kishida was the head of the Cultural Division of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association that the Tokyo censor approved Kishida's productions of *Marius* and its sequel *Fanny* in the capital city.

149. *Miyako shinbun,* October 4, 1940.
150. *JTA*, October 1, 1942; *KHS*, 290.
151. Quoted in Albrecht Dümling, "The Target of Racial Purity," 62.
152. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 8: 356.
153. *Asahi shinbun,* September 16, 1940.
154. Fujita Hiroshi, *Meiji-za*, 253; *Asahi shinbun,* November 11, 1942.
155. *KKNK*, 10: 522.
156. *NT,* May 19, 1946.
157. Army manuals stressed "dashing forward," or *maishin*, to overwhelm the enemy on both attack and defense. In Japanese wartime writing, the phrase could mean aggressive or fearless action of any kind.
158. Editorial, *Engei gahō*, December 1940, 1.
159. *KKNK*, 10: 525.
160. *KHS*, 291.
161. "Dairen zadankai," 38.
162. *KHH*, 512.
163. *KKNK*, 10: 403, 522.
164. *Mainichi shinbun* (Osaka), November 8, 1940.
165. Onoe Baikō, *Ume to kiku*, 70–71.

Chapter 6: Confrontation with America and Britain

1. *Engei gahō*, August 1941, n.p.
2. *Engei gahō*, January 1941, n.p.
3. *Asahi shinbun,* August 3, 1941; *Yomiuri shinbun,* September 3, 1941.
4. *Yomiuri shinbun,* September 1, 1941; *Asahi shinbun,* November 27, 1941.
5. *Asahi shinbun,* April 14, 1941.
6. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 15: 392.
7. Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 400.
8. *Asahi shinbun*, November 1, 1941; *JTA,* November 15, 1941. Admission to a first-run German film in Tokyo was one yen at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack (*JTA,* December 11, 1941).
9. Shaw's play, translated by Mori Ōgai as *The Horse Thief,* was performed by male and female students under Onoe Kikugorō's direction, December 1–25, 1935, at the Ōsaka Kabuki-za and August 1–13, 1936, at the Minami-za in Kyoto (*KKNO*, 8: 541–542; *KKNK*, 10: 77).
10. *Asahi shinbun*, February 7, 1932; *JTA*, January 15, 1942; *SH,* 117.
11. *KKNO*, 9: 163, 191; JTA, October 2, 1941. As was usual at smaller theaters, the troupe changed its bill of plays every ten days (on the first, eleventh, and twenty-first day of each month). Consequently actors were held to an exhausting schedule, playing roles in ten or twelve plays a month.
12. *KKNO*, 9: 164. The term "Public Service Drama" (Kōsei Engeki) was taken over in 1943 and 1944 by local troupes in Nagano, Aichi, Chiba, and Kagawa provinces that gave consolation performances in factories and mines as a public service (Hijikata Masami, "Kotoshi no kōsei engeki," 25).

13. *Engei gahō*, January 1941, 1.

14. Fuwa, "Engeki hō," 2–3.

15. Kikuchi Akira, Fujita Hiroshi, and Watanabe Tamotsu, "Zadankai," 91; Ōyama, *Kokumin engeki ron*, 94.

16. Gonda Yasunosuke, "Shintaiseika no engekikai ni nozomu," 5–6.

17. Kushner, *Thought War*, 94.

18. Iizuka Tomoichirō, "Shintaiseika no engeki," 11–12.

19. Iizuka Tomoichirō, "Koten kokumin geki no hogo," 3–4. Iizuka was overly pessimistic. Kabuki flourished after the war, and excellent young actors emerged to carry on their elders' traditions, among them Baikō VII, Kōshirō VIII, Shōroku II, Danjūrō XI, and Utaemon VI.

20. Tsubouchi Shōyō, "Kanforu chūsha," 9.

21. American officers responsible for kabuki guidance during the postwar Occupation period held this view as well. They imagined that if good new democratic plays were created in kabuki, they would gradually replace the bad old feudalistic dramas. Both Iizuka and the Americans were wrong: old kabuki plays were not dropped as a consequence of staging new plays during the war or after (see Brandon, "Myth and Reality," 68–69, 78–81).

22. Ōtani Takejirō, "Shintaisei to engeki," 10.

23. *KKNO*, 9: 131.

24. *Miyako shinbun,* June 15, 1941.

25. *JTA,* July 17, 1941.

26. *JTA,* October 2, 1941.

27. *KHS*, 276, 304.

28. *KHS*, 301–311.

29. *KHH*, 521.

30. Iizuka, "Koten kokumin geki," 2–3.

31. Ibid., 3.

32. Matsumoto Kōshirō, "'*Kanjinchō*,' de wa komaru," 5.

33. *KHS*, 179, 293–296.

34. *SHES*, 177–179, 376, 468–469. At least as early as 1897, celebratory year-end kabuki bills at the Minami-za in Kyoto were occasionally divided into separate matinee and evening programs. The "matinee" curtain opened as early as 7:30 or 8:00 in the morning, and the evening bill ended a few hours before midnight (Dōmoto Kansei, *Minami-za*, 216–299).

35. *JTA,* July 24, 1941.

36. *JTA,* November 13 and 17, 1941.

37. *JTA,* December 4, 1941.

38. Ichimura Uzaemon, "Senjika no kokorogamae," 51.

39. *JTA,* January 23, 1941.

40. Kodama, "Senchū sengo," 49.

41. Ibid., 50–51; "Sangyō senshi ian no yagai kabuki," 61.

42. For example see Bergamini, *Japan's Imperial Conspiracy*, 803, 809–811.

43. *SHES*, 178.

44. Marlene Mayo writes that *Submarine No. 6* was in "the special attack force at Hawai'i" ("To Be or Not to Be," 274). Since the *Submarine No. 6* that is the subject of Gōda's play sank in 1910, it may be that a second *Submarine No. 6* was commissioned.

45. Gōda Toku, "Sensuitei dai rokugo," 9–10. See also *JTA*, January 15, 1942.

46. Abe Yutaka, "Kansai shibai kenbutsu ki," 23.

47. Hamamura Komezō, "'Dohyō monogatari' no enshutsu," 12.

48. Shinbashi Yūichirō, "Shigatsu no kōsei geki," 24.

49. Quoted in *NGESS,* 3: 243.

50. *SHES*, 675.

51. *SHES*, 674. Fujita Hiroshi gives a slightly different play title: *Kimigayo suisō kyoku* (Kikuchi et al., "Zadankai," 91).

52. Nakamura Umenosuke, et al., *Gurafu Zenshin-za*, 43.

53. Ibid., chronology, 11–13.

54. Nakamura Kan'emon, *Gekidan gojūnen*, 241.

55. *JTA*, August 14, 1941.

56. Endō Tameharu, "Kibō to teigen," 2.

57. *JTA*, May 7, 1942. I identify the year a contest was held; prizes were usually determined and announced the following year.

58. For example see Yi Tu-Hyŏn, "History of Korean Theater," 143.

59. *NGESS,* 2: 256.

60. *SS,* 157–158.

61. *NGESS,* 2: 256–257; *Asahi shinbun,* January 27, 1942. An official history of the Shōchiku Corporation lists eighteen troupes (*za, ichiza, gekidan,* or *kai*) that participated in the 1941 contest. Of these, nine were kabuki troupes, eight managed by the Shōchiku Corporation: Ichikawa Uzaemon Ichiza, Onoe Kikugorō Ichiza, Nakamura Kichiemon Ichiza, Matsumoto Kōshirō Ichiza, Ichikawa Ennosuke Ichiza, Ichikawa Chūsha Ichiza, Kabuki Kai, Kansai Kabuki Gekidan, and the independent Zenshin-za (*SH*, 157–158).

62. Kashiwamura Michio, "Kabuki-za no chūya," 2.

63. *KKNK*, 10: 665.

64. *KKNK*, 10: 586–587.

65. Uno Nobuo, *Kabuki yakusha*, 127–128.

66. Ōyama, *Kokumin engeki ron*, 96.

67. Appointed to the committee were Shōchiku employees Oka Onitarō, Kawajiri Seitan, and Endō Tamaharu, playwright Kubota Mantarō, and scholar-critics Kawatake Shigetoshi, Atsumi Seitarō, and Miyake Shūtarō. Three functionaries of the Bureau of Information and the Special Higher Police were committee "advisers" and "consultants" (see, for example, Kabuki-za, program, February 1942).

68. Miyake Daisuke, "Kabuki kentō iinkai no boshū kyakuhon shinsa ni tsuite," 102–103; *JTA,* November 6, 1941.

69. *JTA*, July 24 and October 23, 1941. See Nakamura Umenosuke et al., *Gurafu Zenshin-za*, chronology, 14–16.

70. Tanaka Makoto, *Mikan yōkyokushū*, *zoku*, 9: 32 and 86–387. The kabuki version retains most of the nō lyrics. See Kabuki-za, program October, 1943, 15–19.

71. Kanze Tetsunojō, "Shinsaku nō 'Chūrei' ni tsuite," 13; *JTA*, November 12 and 13, 1941.

72. "Shinkyoku nō 'Chūrei' shien," 33.

73. "'Chūrei,'" inside cover.

74. *JTA*, February 12 and July 23, 1942.

75. *KKNO,* 9: 132.

76. Tsuwatari Hajime, "Kanmin itchi," 8.

77. Scripts withdrawn, 10; passed, 2,814; with warning, 48; with deletions, 209: total, 3,081 (*Kokumin shinbun,* February 4, 1942).

78. The violations were using an unapproved play (two), using a script not approved for that theater (one), acting business not in the script (three), using a banned music recording (one), hindering public order (two), and, the most common offense, disturbing public morality (eleven) (*KKNK,* 10: 602).

79. Kodama, "Senchū sengo," 50.

80. Jay Rubin suggests that to sidetrack the censor from the actual content of an article an editor might make a title "more bellicose than necessary" (*Injurious to Public Morals,* 261). Perhaps that happened here.

81. Kawano Chūji, "Sashikoroshita 'kōnichi seishin'."

82. *Yomiuri shinbun,* May 29, 1941.

83. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 15: 507.

84. Ibid., 15: 458–459.

85. Takashima Yuzaburō and Chŏn Byŏnho, *Seiki no bijin byōka Sai Shōki*, 217–219; Judy Van Zile describes the American tour and repertory of dances in considerable detail (*Perspectives on Korean Dance*, 185–219).

86. *JTA,* November 20, 27, and 29, 1941. After the war, Ch'oe chose to live in North Korea, where she taught and occasionally performed. She is reported to have died in 1969 (Van Zile, *Perspectives*, 187, 214–218).

87. *JTA,* December 7, 11, 1941.

88. *Asahi shinbun*, December 7, 1941.

89. When the war was over, American Occupation officials, too, tried to determine the terms of public discourse, and they forbad writers to use the phrase "War of Greater East Asia" (SCAPIN 448, noted in Richard B. Finn, *Winners in Peace*, 63).

90. *Yomiuri shinbun,* December 13, 1941.

91. Kodama, "Senchū sengo," 50–52.

92. Onoe Baikō, *Ume to kiku*, 74.

93. Ozawa Ryōzō, "Zōsan gekirei ō-kabuki," 113.

94. Ibid., 116.

95. As the war continued, newspapers carried less and less news about kabuki activities. By 1945, kabuki was virtually invisible in the daily press.

96. *JTA*, December 11, 1941.

97. *KHH*, 539.

98. Furukawa Roppa, *Furukawa Roppa Shōwa nikki, senchū hen*, 183. Miyake Shūtarō and Shōchiku president Ōtani Takejirō both claimed attendance was poor in the days immediately following Japan's attack because "this was a once-in-a-lifetime event." But, from the middle of the month and thereafter, attendance boomed (see *NGESS,* 3: 232–233).

99. Ichimura Uzaemon, "Senjika no kokorogamae," 51.

100. *JTA,* December 20, 1941.

101. *Engei gahō,* February 1942, 3.

102. *Engei gahō*, November 1940, 75. In the 1950s, after the war, photographs show President Ōtani welcoming John Foster Dulles and other important Americans to the Kabuki-za. The welcoming occasion is the same; only the guests change.

103. Any system of control had to apply to a huge theatrical establishment: 2,000 theaters, 801 troupes, 17,945 employees, and 4,668 play scripts staged monthly (*KKNK*, 10: 651).

104. *JTA*, December 14 and 16, 1941.

105. Two-a-day programs were not uncommon in light entertainment theaters at this time. A system of two short kabuki programs a day, one at 3:30 and one at 7:30 p.m., had been tried a decade earlier at the Kabuki-za without success (*SHH*, 215). During 1941, a matinee and an evening program gradually became standard at large theaters, as noted before.

106. *KKNK*, 10: 651.

107. C. Wright Mills, *The Power Elite*, 246.

108. Quoted in Takafusa Nakamura, *History of Shōwa Japan*, 138.

109. *JTA*, September 9, 1942.

110. Jansen, *Japan and China*, 336.

111. *JTA*, December 4, 14, 16, 31, 1941; Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 15: 540. Similarly, "French fries" were renamed "freedom fries" on the cafeteria menu of the U.S. House of Representatives in Washington, D.C., when France fell out of favor with the Bush administration in 2003.

112. *The Cultivator*, staged in June 1942 (*SHES*, 707), was entered in the 1941 play contest.

113. Quoted in Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 415–416. I have not included some names of actors and playwrights mentioned by the author.

114. Ibid., 416.

Chapter 7: Japan and Kabuki at the Zenith

1. *Engei gahō*, March 1942, 1.

2. *JTA*, February 17, 1942. It seems incredible, but the Raffles Hotel advertised "Dance and Dinner" the evening of February 11, four nights before the city fell (*Straits Times*, February 11, 1941).

3. Miyake Genjirō, quoted in Henry Frei, *Guns of February* (157). For descriptions of the executions by Japanese participants see Chapter 10 and also Fusayama Tadao,

Memoir of Tadao Fusayama, 100–102. Donald Calman argues that wanton cruelty was endemic in the Japanese army. Officers routinely brutalized men under them. Prisoners were despised. Under the pressure of battle, the Japanese army "lapsed into barbarism" in Taiwan, in Korea, and in Port Arthur long before the Fifteen-Year War began (*Nature and Origins of Japanese Imperialism*, 6, 171–185).

4. *JTA*, January 3, 1942.

5. For example, see John J. Stephan, *Hawaii under the Rising Sun,* 54–68, 122–147, for a discussion of such plans.

6. The sea victories referred to are the destruction of America's battleships at Pearl Harbor on December 8 and the sinking of England's *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* two days later off the east coast of the Malay Peninsula. With both the American and British Pacific fleets out of the way, the Japanese Imperial Navy appeared to be uncontested throughout Asia and the western Pacific Ocean.

7. Quoted in *NGESS,* 3: 232–233.

8. P. Leroy-Beaulieu, *De la colonization chez les peuples modernes* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1891), 839–841 (quoted in Michel Beaud, *A History of Capitalism, 1500–2000*, 161).

9. Some ideologists termed this a "return" to the south, citing commonality of blood and race, and recalling the era of Japanese commerce with China, Thailand, Indochina, Java, and the Philippines circa 1400–1600 (see Marshall Masashi Ohashi, "Japan's Southward Movement as Seen through Japanese Eyes," 222–232).

10. Japanese are not the only people who cherish an exceptionalist view of themselves. People in many cultures see themselves as morally superior to others. China is the Central Kingdom. A Javanese principality is the Nail of the Universe. Jews are God's Chosen People. Europeans carry the White Man's Burden. And Americans have an obligation to bring Democracy and Freedom to the rest of the world. When the Pacific War was won, General Douglas MacArthur articulated an exceptionalist rationale for the American occupation of Japan. His speech was read before 400,000 people at a rally for "I Am an American Day" in New York City in 1947: "With God's help and a strong abiding faith in our destiny and will to aid a tired world, we must become for that world its strong and dependable bulwark of human liberty. We must ever mark our country as a shining symbol of liberty and human progress to inspire among oppressed people everywhere that they, too, may be free" (*Pacific Stars and Stripes*, May 21, 1947). And in recent decades, a major justification for expanding American military and political power around the globe lies in what George Packer has called "the moral vanity" of American exceptionalism ("Books: Fighting Faiths," 96–97).

11. Calman, *Nature and Origins*, 63.

12. From the pamphlet "Read This Alone — and the War Can Be Won," prepared by the Operations and Planning Staff, Japanese 25th Army, under the direction of Colonel Tsuji Masanobu for the Malaya campaign (Tsuji Masanobu, *Singapore the Japanese Version*, 328).

13. Early nineteenth-century scholars made proposals to invade and control Korea,

Manchuria, the northern territories (Sakhalin and Kamchatka), the Philippines, and other southern territories almost a hundred years before the Pacific War began (Calman, *Nature and Origins,* 64–66).

14. *JTA*, May 1, 1942.

15. Quoted in James C. Thompson Jr., Peter W. Stanley, and John Curtis Perry, *Sentimental Imperialists*, 143. As Thompson notes, Americans found the Japanese belief that their culture was superior to white civilization "a completely alien, almost literally unthinkable concept" (143).

16. Calman's paraphrase of Motoori Norinaga (*Nature and Origins,* 54).

17. From a 1938 Ministry of Education publication, quoted in Jansen, *Japan and China*, 337.

18. See essays by Aiko Kurasawa (Java), E. Bruce Reynolds (Thailand), Yoji Akashi (Malaya and Singapore), and Motoe Terami-Wada (Philippines) in Grant K. Goodman, ed., *Japanese Cultural Policies in Southeast Asia during World War 2*.

19. *Tribune* (Manila), August 25, 1944.

20. *Tribune* (Manila), July 6, 1942.

21. *Tribune* (Manila), April 9, 1942; February 12, 1943; June 18, 1944; and February 1, 1945.

22. *Tribune* (Manila), February 12, 1943.

23. *JTA,* July 1, 1942.

24. Terasaki Hiroshi, "Genjō to shidō," 29.

25. Endō Shingo, "Nanpō no engeki kōsaku," 1.

26. Takaoka Sennon, "Kyakuhon gairon," 134. Little came of these plans, however.

27. Ozawa Yoshikuni, *Dai tōa kyōeiken no ningyō geki*, 1–4. The author was widely read in German, French, and English language theater scholarship of that era, citing works by William Ridgeway, Allardyce Nicoll, and Loomis Havermeyer on non-European theater, J. Kats on Javanese *wayang,* Rene Nicolas on Thai shadow plays, Bernard Leach and Genevieve Wimsatt on Chinese shadow plays, and G. Pischel, E. P. Horrwitz, and Ananda Coomarswamy on Indian puppetry as well as *The Tony Sarg Marionette Book*.

28. See Ohashi, "Japan's Southward Movement," especially chapter 7, for a description of the many ideological justifications for Japan's leadership role in Asia.

29. *JTA,* May 7, 1942.

30. Goodman, *Japanese Cultural Policies*, 4.

31. *Miyako shinbun,* April 3, 1938.

32. For example, see listings of nō performances and recitals in Taiwan, Shanghai, Manchuria, and, indeed, San Francisco, in *Hōshō* 19, 7 (July 1940), 96.

33. Ichikawa Jukai, *Kotobuki no ji*, 90; Fujita Hiroshi, *Meiji-za*, 152.

34. *Engei gahō*, November, 1938, n.p.

35. Nakamura Ganjirō, *Nakamura Ganjirō*, 153–155.

36. *KHS*, 276.

37. *NGESS*, 2: 391; *Asahi shinbun*, March 7, 1939.

38. *SS*, 159; *NGESS*, 3: 244.

39. Neither the Japanese nor the Americans were able to establish a unified command structure for their military actions in the Pacific. As one consequence, Japan's Navy General Staff was able to conceal the Midway defeat even from the Army Ministry and the prime minister. "The navy kept the extent of its defeat secret from the government and the Japanese people, who remained dangerously in the dark" (Takafusa Nakamura, *History of Shōwa Japan*, 206).

40. Ichimura Uzaemon XV and Ichikawa Ennosuke II led earlier kabuki tours in the late 1930s. Also, kabuki actors under contract to Tōhō, including Nakamura Kanzaburō, toured Manchuria and Korea in July–August 1939 (see *KHS*, 293, 307; *JTA,* January 22, May 7, June 25, July 30, September 10, 1942; Nakamura Kanzaburō, *Jiden*, viii–ix).

41. *JTA*, January 15, 1942. It is unclear whether the troupe was sent or not.

42. *Tribune* (Manila), June 14, 1942.

43. Ozawa Ryōzō, *Onnagata konjakutan*, 476–478.

44. For the term, see, for example, *Tōkyō shinbun,* September 20, 1938.

45. See Shibusawa Hideo, *Kōgun imon*, 236–239 and unpaged photographs.

46. Jennifer Robertson discusses Takarazuka in Asia (*Takarazuka*, 127–134).

47. A number of professional nō teacher-performers settled in Taiwan, Korea, Shanghai, and Manchuria. Some may have given dedicatory performances (see *Hōshō* 19, 7 [July 1940]: 96).

48. See Shinko Kagaya, "Nō Performances in *Gaichi*," 258–260 for further details.

49. *NT,* February 4, 1944.

50. Mark R. Peattie, *Nan'yō*, 225.

51. *Bangkok Times*, June 16, 1942; *JTA*, August 23, 1942.

52. *JTA*, November 18, 1941.

53. Kushner gives an excellent short history of the Yoshimoto Corporation. Yoshimoto was not involved in kabuki, but it was and is the major corporate manager of *rakugo* and *manzai* superstars and the owner of specialist variety theaters (*yose*) where they perform. The last two *rakugo* performers sent to Manchuria by Yoshimoto arrived there in May 1945. Trapped on the Asian mainland when the war ended, they returned to Japan in 1947 (*Thought War*, 91–114).

54. Kushner, *Thought War*, 99–100.

55. See Kōriyama Kazuo, *Kessen manzai sakura hinode kessakushū.*

56. Foreign tours were regularly noted in *JTA* and *NT* during the 1930s and early 1940s.

57. Between 1960 and 1993, major kabuki troupes have visited the United States seventeen times and Europe fifteen times. In Asia kabuki troupes toured to Burma, Thailand, and India in 1977, Australia in 1978 and 1988, the People's Republic of China in 1979, Korea in 1988, and the Philippines, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Taiwan in 1990 (Nagayama Takeomi et al., eds., *Grand Kabuki,* xxi–xxii, 411–412).

58. *JTM*, January 5, 1933.

59. Kabuki-za, program, January 1942.

60. *KHS*, 302–310; *KHH*, 539–553.

61. Ōyama, *Kokumin engeki ron*, 365.

62. *KHH*, 541, 550–551.

63. *NGESS*, 3: 244.

64. *SS*, 156; *JTA*, July 2, 1942; *Engei gahō*, August 1942, n.p.

65. *JTA*, October 15, 1942.

66. Kabuki-za, program, October 1942.

67. *SHES*, 273; Katsu Toshizō, "Kōsei geki o mite," 22.

68. *SHES*, 64, 273, 332.

69. Motoyama Tekishū, "Uzaemon no mochiaji," 4.

70. *KHH*, 548.

71. Major kabuki theaters proudly used a traditional draw curtain patterned in broad rust, black, and green stripes. Small, unimportant theaters were forbidden to use a draw curtain and had to make do with a less prestigious drop curtain.

72. Quoted in *KHH*, 550.

73. *Asahi shinbun,* February 4, 1942.

74. Nakamura Tetsurō, *Kabuki no kindai*, 481–483; Hasegawa Shin, "Zenshin-za no shonichi to doboku kōji," 14–15; Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 120.

75. *KKNO*, 9: 207.

76. Shōchiku Kabushiki-gaisha, ed., *Shōchiku kujūnen shi*, 137.

77. *SHES*, 64–65, 179, 273, 377.

78. *KKNO*, 9: 217.

79. *JTA,* October 1, 1942; *NGESS,* 3: 338; *KKNO*, 9: 313.

80. *JTA,* June 11, 1942; Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 433. *Blood* was scheduled to open a year earlier, in May 1941, but the Foreign Ministry thought the play inappropriate at a time when Japan and America were engaged in peace negotiations.

81. These plays about American Nisei anticipated a massive study produced by the Ministry of Health and Welfare in 1943 that called on Nisei to resist assimilation and "remain aware of the superiority of the Japanese people and proud of being a member of the leading race." The study, *An Investigation of Global Policy with the Yamato Race as Nucleus*, is quoted in John W. Dower, *Japan in War and Peace*, 277–278.

82. From "Outline of Bureau of Information Propaganda Policy Regarding the Japan-Britain-America War," dated December 8, 1941, in Uchikawa, *Gendai shi*, 41: 368.

83. Uchikawa, *Gendai shi*, 41: 460–476.

84. The New National Drama Troupe staged *Twenty-Year Blizzard* in December 1942, on the anniversary of the first year of the War of Greater East Asia. In one scene, young Franklin D. Roosevelt appears as undersecretary of the navy, a minor figure in the Washington Naval Conference of 1922. The point of the drama is that America unjustly limited Japan's navy to inferior status in comparison with the American and British navies, leading inexorably to the "blizzard attack" on Pearl

Harbor twenty years later. As in so many other plays, Japan is not an aggressor but a victim of Anglo-American chicanery (Shinkokugeki, *Shinkokugeki*, 533–534).

85. Keene, *Landscapes and Portraits*, 307–308.

86. *JTA*, October 29, 1942; *NT*, April 28, 1943.

87. Tanaka Makoto, *Mikan yōkyokushū, zoku*, 2: 198; 14: 224–225.

88. Nishino Harvey, "Shinsaku nō no hyakunen, 1," 8–13. I thank Shinko Kagaya, who brought Professor Nishino's research to my attention and gave me a copy of his publication.

89. Tanaka Makoto, *Mikan yōkyokushū*, *zoku*, 1: 68. The title, *Uchiteshi yaman* (Fight without quarter), comes from a song lyric in *Hotsuma tsutae*, a collection of Shinto legends.

90. Tanaka Makoto, *Mikan yōkyokushū*, *zoku*, 1: 386–387.

91. Nō plays are conventionally classified according to major role type: Shinto deity, warrior, woman, deranged character, or demon. Takenaka could have written a demon play in which Admiral Yamaguchi returns from death as a vengeful spirit. Instead, he wrote a defeated warrior play, in which Yamaguchi is quietly memorialized and his death mourned.

92. See Stephan, *Hawaii under the Rising Sun*, 103–105

93. Tanaka Makoto, *Mikan yōkyokushū*, *zoku*, 14: 223–228.

94. From *Shina jihen utashū* (Collection of China incident nō songs), quoted in Ienaga, *Sarugaku-nō*, 30.

95. From *Dai tōa sensō koutashū,* quoted in Ienaga, *Sarugaku-nō*, 31–33. In order, the revised song lyrics are set to music from *Takasago, Pining Wind*, *Death Rock, Feather Robe, Kumasaka,* and *Crane and Tortoise.*

96. Ienaga, *Sarugaku-nō*, 33.

97. *NT*, July 27, 1943.

98. The new *bunraku* war plays are *The Japanese Spirit of a Seafaring Nation* (1941), *Departing for the Front* (1941, revived 1942), *A Water-Soaked Corpse* (1942 and 1943), *Invigorating National Prestige* (1942), *Loyal Souls of the War Dead* (1942, adapted from nō), *The Sword Smith* (1943), *Festival of the Equator* (1943), *Recalled Visage: War God of the Sky* (1943), *Spirit of Brave Wild Eagle Pilots* (1944), and *Dragon's Dance of Victory* (1944), in addition to a 1940 revival of *Three Glorious Human Bombs* (*SHES*, 332–333, 329–334, 708–709; *Engei gahō*, September 1942, n.p.). There may have been others.

99. Translated in Richard Storry, *Japan and the Decline of the West in Asia*, 56.

100. For an extended analysis of wartime and postwar poetry, see Steve Rabson, *Righteous Cause or Tragic Folly*, 46–76.

101. From *Dai tōa seisen shi ikashū: Taishō no shita ni* (Under the imperial rescript: Collection of brilliant Greater East Asian sacred war poetry), quoted in Takasaki Ryūji, ed., *Sensō shiikashū jiten*, 122.

102. *KHH*, 553.

103. *JTA*, June 11, 1942.

104. *KHS*, 302–311.

105. *SHES*, 469–471; *JTA*, May 21, 1942. French music was included because occupied France was an Axis ally.

106. Some government requests for support crossed the line between national interest and self-interest. In 1942 the Imperial Rule Assistance Association called on theater troupes to perform propaganda plays in support of association-backed Diet candidates. Kabuki actors managed to avoid the invitation, but seven modern drama groups "voluntarily" staged campaign skits and plays in sixty-eight locations during the election period (*Asahi shinbun,* April 8, 1942).

107. The theaters were Shōchiku's Kabuki-za, Tōkyō Gekijō, Meiji-za, and Shinbashi Enbujō, and Tōhō's Teikoku Gekijō, Takarazuka-za, and Yūraku-za (*KHS*, 310).

108. *JTA,* December 3, 10, and 20, 1942.

109. *Asahi shinbun,* December 8, 1942.

110. *JTA*, December 3, 1942; *Engei gahō*, August 1942, 14.

111. *KHS*, 310.

112. Inoue Isaburō, "Kessenka no kōgyō shinnen," 2.

113. Kobiki S., "Wholesome Drama, Cinema Advocated," 4.

114. Quoted in *NGESS*, 3: 233.

115. Inoue, "Kessenka," 2–3.

116. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 15: 458.

117. *Asahi shinbun,* March 18 and 21, 1942.

118. *JTA*, June 4, 1942.

119. *NGESS,* 3: 340.

120. Ōhara Yukio, *Kobayashi Ichizō no Shōwa engeki shi*, 190–194.

121. *Engei gahō*, May 1943, 3, and April 1943, 17; *NT,* March 25, 1943. Because of *Sugawara and the Secrets of Calligraphy*'s feudal theme, American Occupation censors forbad performance of scenes from the play between November 1945 and May 1947 (see Brandon, "Myth and Reality," 27–34).

122. *KKNK*, supplement volume, 38.

123. *JTA,* February 5, 1942.

124. Critic Miyake Shūtarō mentions four contests: the Theater Prize of the Japan Central League of Culture Arts Festival (since 1940), the Sadanji Prize funded by Shōchiku to commemorate the actor's death in 1940, the Theater Prize of the Japan Culture Association, and the Bureau of Information Grand Prize (established in 1941) (*Kabuki kenkyū,* 486). And we have seen that Shōchiku's Kabuki Investigation Committee, the Citizens' Drama Movement, and the League of Touring Theaters awarded important playwriting prizes as well.

125. Kodama, "Senchū sengo," 48, 57–58.

126. Quoted in Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 448–449.

127. Nagata Hideo, "Jōhōkyoku kokumin engeki," 2.

128. The usual bill was made up of two to four plays, so that in the league's first year three thousand or more play performances were given (see statistics in Nihon Engeki Kyōkai, ed., *Engeki nenkan,* 235–236).

129. Ogawa Takeo, "Idō engeki no genjō to kikaku," 319–322. The number of mem-

ber troupes was not fixed but constantly fluctuated. Kurabayashi lists thirteen full-time troupes in mid-1942: the Shōchiku Citizens' Drama Touring Troupe one and two, Tōhō Touring Culture Squad, Yoshimoto Touring Drama Squad, Yoshimoto Touring Variety Squad, Kagotora Touring Drama Squad, Kagotora Touring Variety Squad, New Rising Touring Drama Squad, New Rising Touring Variety Squad, Shōchiku Kansai Touring Drama Troupe, Yoshimoto Kansai Touring Drama Squad, Takarazuka Musical Theater Touring Squad, and Mizuho Theater Troupe (*Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 429–432).

130. The first and second Shōchiku Citizens' Touring Troupes and the Shōchiku Kansai Touring Drama Troupe.

131. Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 429; Nakamura Umenosuke et al., *Gurafu Zenshin-za*, chronology, 16.

132. *SS*, 157. The plays were two dances, *Sanbasō* and *The Echigo Lion,* and *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers*, acts 5 and 6.

133. The plays were Okamoto Kidō's well-loved new-kabuki play *The Tale of Shuzenji* and two lively dances, *The Puppet Sanbasō* and *Benkei at the Bridge*.

134. The Kansai Kabuki Actors' Association Troupe and the Ōtani Tomoemon Troupe were also nominally attached to the league during 1941–1942, but it seems they did not tour (see Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 407, 429).

135. *NGESS*, 2: 390.

136. Takaoka, "Kyakuhon," 124–125, 130–131.

137. Ibid., 113, 116.

138. Ogawa, "Idō engeki," 329.

139. Takaoka, "Kyakuhon," 119–120.

140. Nakamura Kichiemon I did *Sakai's Drum*, and Onoe Kikugorō VI danced *Maid of Dōjō Temple* over and over again when these stars did morale tours near the end of the war (see Chapter 8).

141. Ibaraki, *Nihon shingeki shōshi*, 105.

142. Ibid., 108.

143. Nihon Engeki Kyōkai, *Engeki nenkan*, 235–236.

144. Kan, *Sengo engeki,* 41.

145. Senga Akira, "Idō engeki undō no rinen," 43–44.

146. Ibid., 9, 21.

147. This is Louise Young's phrase characterizing Japanese capitalism in the 1930s and early 1940s (*Japan's Total Empire*, 350).

148. Quoting from ibid., 44.

149. We can note that government anticapitalist initiatives in theater were fairly successful, at least in the short run. They were a monumental failure in the Manchurian agrarian resettlement program (see Young, *Japan's Total Empire,* 339, 343–350).

150. Prasenjit Duara, *Sovereignty and Authenticity*, 343, 344.

151. "Engekikai kōron" (1943), 2.

152. The troupe made its first morale tour in August 1941, to factories, schools, and hospitals in the Tokyo-Yokohama area. This was outside the League of Tour-

ing Theaters system, however (Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 409, 429).

153. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 16: 131. I have deleted personal names mentioned in the article.

154. Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 414.

155. Kan, *Zōho,* 49–50; Kan, *Sengo engeki,* 41. Other troupes followed the same practice.

156. Kan, *Sengo engeki,* 42.

157. Ozawa Ryōzō, "'Zōsan gekirei ō-kabuki,'" 114.

158. Ogawa, "Idō engeki," 331–332; Kawatsura Ryūsan, Preface, 1–2.

159. Kishida Kunio, "Engeki to seiji," 27–35.

160. Nihon Engeki Kyōkai, *Engeki nenkan*, 310. There is a discrepancy in the figures: 1,090 scripts, about one-third of the total, are not accounted for. Were these difficult cases that were discouraged "off the board" or set aside for later action? Or is the discrepancy an oversight? We don't know, but we need to treat the figures with caution.

161. *Asahi shinbun*, February 5, 1932.

162. Shirai Matsujirō, "Kabuki koten geki no shin enshutsu ni tsuite," 5.

163. *SHES*, index, 103.

164. Imaya Kyūhei, "Kabuki shoshin mondō," 24.

165. Hayashi Yawara, "'Ninoguchi mura' to 'Sakaro no matsu,'" 9–11.

166. Namely, *Engei gahō, Kokumin engeki, Engeki* (Theater), *Gendai engeki* (Modern Theater), and *Tōhō* (Tokyo Takarazuka). In 1943 the five theater journals were conflated into two new journals (See Chapter 8).

167. "Engeki zasshi kyōgikai no hossoku ni sai shite," 1.

168. Rubin describes how the bureau imposed on literary and general magazines a similar system of editorial guidance and censorship, with greater military involvement (*Injurious to Public Morals*, 261–264).

169. *JTA*, September 7, 1942.

170. Ōyama Isao, "Kabuki geki wa fukenkō na engeki ka?" 26–27.

171. "Nihon engeki no genjō o kataru," 3.

172. *JTA*, December 8, 1942.

173. *NT*, January 1, 1943.

174. *NT*, January 17, 1943.

175. *KKNO*, 9: 184.

176. This statement by Miyake Shūtarō, written in August 1942, is found in the final chapter, "An Era Preparing to Establish a Citizens' Drama," of *Engeki gojūnen shi* (398). Miyake dropped this chapter when he republished the book after the war (1947).

177. Fuwa Suketoshi, "Engeki zasshi no yuku beki michi," 1.

178. *JTA*, October 8, 1942. Actually three miniature submarines succeeded in entering Sydney Harbor on May 31, 1942. They fired several torpedoes at the USS *Chicago* but hit only an old ferryboat. Their six crew members perished.

Chapter 8: Kabuki and Japan's "Decisive Battle"

1. Poem by Tanaka Kawauchi quoted in *Engei gahō*, January 1943, n.p.

2. *Asahi shinbun,* January 29, 1943.

3. In 1890, American naval officer Alfred Thayer Mahan published *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History, 1660–1783*, in which he advocated a single all-out "decisive battle" to gain control of the sea. Mahan's ideas became naval doctrine in Japan.

4. *NT*, February 9, 1943.

5. Iritani, *Group Psychology of the Japanese*, 70.

6. An estimated one million Russian, German, Italian, Romanian, and Hungarian soldiers perished in the battle for Stalingrad.

7. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 17: 230–231.

8. Ozawa Ryōzō, "Kabuki geki shin shiken," 14.

9. *Asahi shinbun,* July 9, 1943.

10. Haneda Yoshirō, "'Gunzoku' to 'Fuchinkan gekichin,'" 76–77.

11. Ōyama, *Kokumin engeki ron*, 138.

12. *KHH*, 561.

13. *Asahi shinbun,* December 21, 1943.

14. *NT*, December 22, 1943.

15. Code breakers in the U.S. Army Military Intelligence Service deciphered a radio message giving Admiral Yamamoto Isoroku's flight plans on April 18, enabling U.S. fighters to intercept Yamamoto's plane over the Philippines and shoot it down.

16. Ozawa Ryōzō, "Kabuki geki," 10.

17. *NT*, January 26, 1943.

18. My translation. In Japanese: "Umi yukaba mizuku kabane, yama yukaba kusa musu kabane, ōkimi no hen ni koso shiname, kaerimi wa seji."

19. Iritani, *Group Psychology of the Japanese*, 168; Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze*, 139.

20. Dower, *Japan in War and Peace*, 102.

21. The cast is listed in *SHES*, 594.

22. My condensation of a play synopsis by Kuzuki Shinzō ("'Umi yukaba' mita mama," 14–16).

23. *NT*, January 7, 1943.

24. Japanese military censors strictly prohibited identifying the location of any military unit. Therefore the play did not reveal that the pilots' training site was in the main Japanese islands.

25. Kuzuki Shinzō, "'Shinjuwan,' shibai mita mama," 31.

26. Kuzuki Shinzō, "'Karigani to tsubame,' Meiji-za no sangatsu shibai mita mama," 24.

27. Nakamura Kan'emon, *Gekidan gojūnen*, 270–271.

28. It is unclear why the troupe initially refused the Shōchiku proposal. After

the war, Vanguard members pointed to their haggling over *Sinking the Unsinkable Battleship* as an example of the troupe's "resistance" to militarism (Kawarazaki Kunitarō, *Onnagata hanseiki,* 174–175).

29. *Asahi shinbun,* December 10, 1943.

30. *NT,* January 21, 1943.

31. *NT,* May 12, 1943.

32. Nakai Yasutaka, "Kaigun," 1, 20–27.

33. Motoyama Tekishū, "Kikakusei no chintai," 1–2.

34. Nishida Sakimatsu, "Niza enmoku kentō," 12.

35. New plays with prowar, anti-American themes were performed in Kansai by non-kabuki troupes on many occasions. As one example, in 1943 Kikuta Kazuo wrote *A Girl Returned from San Francisco* as a star vehicle for Mizutani Yaeko. The popular *shinpa* actress played Tomiko, a girl who has been educated in America but reverts "from degraded Yankeeism to the true spirit of Japanese womanhood" when she returns to Japan (*NT,* January 14, 1943). Mizutani's troupe, the Art Theater, toured the production to Kyoto, Osaka, and Kobe in 1943 and 1944 (*SHES*, index, 89; *KKNK*, supplement volume, 54).

36. *KKNK*, supplement volume, 6.

37. The play was mounted at the Minami-za (October 1943), the Kado-za (August and December 1943), and the Yachio Gekijō (August 1944) (*KKNK*, supplement volume, 90; *SHES*, 66, 273, 274, 320).

38. *KKNO*, 9: 253, 278–279.

39. Torie Tetsuya, "Jikyoku geki ni tesse yo," 4.

40. Yamamoto Shūji, *Engeki to bunka,* 365.

41. The board also scheduled a Conference of Five Nō Schools in late September that was cancelled because the hereditary heads (*iemoto*) of the nō schools violently opposed joint performances proposed by the board ("Gekidan jiji," December 1943, 29).

42. *NT,* August 18, 1943.

43. *KKNK*, supplement volume, 86. A play by Mayama did not appear on the December program at the Kabuki-za (see *KHS*, 321).

44. *KKNK*, supplement volume, 108.

45. For a complete list of troupes, see *Engei gahō,* January 1943, 40–41.

46. Kubota Mantarō et al., eds., *Engeki nenkan*, *Shōwa nijūninen ban*, 125–127.

47. *Yomiuri shinbun,* August 3, 1943.

48. The censor's July 3 comments are reprinted in Terasawa Takanobu, "Ken'etsu gakari no tachiba kara," 3, and Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 470–471.

49. "Engeki mo dangan tare" (August 13, 16, 1943).

50. *NT,* April 1, 1943. The Home Ministry does not seem to have maintained statistical summaries of theater censorship actions, in contrast to film, for which they kept meticulous records. Occasionally theater censors released figures of how many scripts were received, suppressed, or approved over a month's or a year's time.

But these press releases were brief and often incomplete. For example, for the two months March and April 1942, the censor reported receiving "2,649 [scripts] of which 1,374 plays were approved for public performance" (*JTA*, May 7, 1942). Does this mean the other 1,275 were disapproved, that is, banned? If so, almost half of the submitted scripts were forbidden, which is improbable. Or were some partially approved, or approved with recommended changes? The brief report does not say.

51. Terasawa, "Ken'etsu gakari," 3.

52. The hardboiled yet sentimental antiheroes of gangster plays (*shiranamimono*) and plays of wandering gamblers (*matatabimono*) held the same fascination for Japanese audiences as did James Cagney gangster movies of the 1930s–1940s for American movie audiences. But the lawless nihilism of the heroes in *Benten the Thief* and *Tokijirō of Kutsukake* was anathema to Japan's wartime censors. The last productions permitted were in 1939 and 1941 (*SHES*, index, 64; Nakamura Tetsurō, *Kabuki no kindai*, 293–300).

53. *KHS*, 313.

54. Ozawa Ryōzō, "Kabuki geki no genjō, shiken," 10.

55. Furuoka Jusaburō, "Kokusaku ni sōte bakushin seyo," 38–39.

56. For example, see *Kageki*, May 1940, 145–148; September 1940, 81; and October 1940, 158–161. In October 1940, the bureau closed this frivolous journal.

57. *JTA*, October 1, 1942; "Kessenka taishū engeki no kentō," 4.

58. Sugamura Susumu, "Ken'etsu no kyōka kara," 16.

59. Kawaguchi Matsutarō, "Kanō butaichō saigo no hi." The approval stamp is seen on the first manuscript page. The censor drew double lines through disapproved phrases and lines. Revisions are written between lines in the script.

60. Ibid., act 2, 15.

61. Ōtani Takejirō, "Jikyoku to dai Nihon kōgyō kyōkai," 2.

62. *Engei gahō*, August 1943, 21.

63. Miyake Saburō, "Kabuki geki no danganka," 33.

64. Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 518–519.

65. The "Theatrical Notes" column, compiled weekly by Amakata Tsunejirō, appeared in the *Nippon Times* for the last time on December 30, 1943.

66. "Shōwa jūhachinendo jōhōkyoku kokumin engeki senshō yōkō," 20; "Jōhōkyoku boshū kokumin eiga kokumin engeki kyakuhon nyūsen happyō," 20.

67. Hasegawa Shin, "Taishū engeki shiken," 10.

68. Kawarazaki Chōjūrō, "Kabuki shibai taisetsu ni," 2.

69. Yamaguchi Hiroichi, "Fukyō no shibai," 21–22.

70. Takeshita, *Oka Onitarō*, 330.

71. *KHS*, 317.

72. *SHES*, 472. Half a dozen new dance plays were staged. Otherwise, most of the seventy-odd plays staged at the Kabuki-za that season were familiar standards.

73. *Asahi shinbun,* May 13, 1943.

74. Motoyama, "Kikakusei no chintai," 1. Here Motoyama appears to refer to the breakdown of the old Edo period actor-manager system, in which the leading actor

set the artistic shape of a production. In the twentieth century, a new play was commonly directed by a critic, scholar, writer, or other stage "amateur," that is, someone not trained in kabuki acting.

75. Ibid.

76. Ichikawa Ennosuke, "Fusoku furi," 5.

77. Yamamoto Shūji, "Kessenka no kabuki geki," 7–8. Critics during the war were content to use a single undifferentiated term, *shajitsushugi*, or realism, to damn kabuki. In *shingeki*, many realisms were debated: progressive realism (*shinpōteki riarizumu*), developmental realism (*hattenteki riarizumu*), bourgeois realism (*burujoa riarizumu*), anticapitalist realism (*han shihonshugi riarizumu*), and Marxist socialist realism (*shakaishugi riarizumu*). For example, see Ozaki, *Shingeki no ashioto*, 159–161, and Senda Koreya, *Senda Koreya engeki ronshu*, 3: 315–317.

78. *Engekikai*, photo caption, November 1943, n.p.

79. For a discussion of the term *taishū* in popular entertainment, see Robertson, *Takarazuka*, 32–34.

80. *Tōkyō shinbun,* August 14, 1943.

81. *KKNK*, supplement volume, 21.

82. American bombing raids kept the theater dark in April and May 1945. The last piece with a war setting was *Asian Younger Brother*, June 1945. After the war, Shōchiku converted the theater into a movie house (*SHES*, 763).

83. The New National Drama Troupe staged numerous war plays: *Today's Heroes* (1932), *Earth and Soldiers* (1938), *Our Wild Eagle Pilots* (1942), *Before the Attack on Hong Kong* (1943), *Our Common Enemy* (1943), and *Pacific Breakwater* (1944) (Shinkokugeki, *Shinkokugeki,* 474–541). Thirty-three years after the war's end, the New National Drama Troupe revisited the Pacific War in a drama that eulogized pilots of the Kamikaze Special Attack Force who rammed their planes into American ships in 1944 and 1945. The play's title, *Cherry Blossom Comrades*, calls up the image of the samurai whose life is like the cherry blossom, brief but beautiful (*SHES,* 225; Shinkokugeki, *Shinkokugeki*, 858, 861). In 1987, the New National Drama Troupe dissolved. Younger audiences of an affluent postwar generation found other entertainments and pastimes more to their liking.

84. Torie Tetsuya, "Kotenmono ni miru jikyokusei," 6–7.

85. Miyake Saburō, "Kabuki geki," 51.

86. *KHS,* 237.

87. Major contributors were the Patriotic Industrial Association, Shōchiku, Tōhō, and the *Mainichi shinbun* (¥50,000 each), Yoshimoto (¥25,000), the Industrial Group (¥20,000), and Takarazuka (¥10,000) (Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 455).

88. *SH,* 122; Torie, "Kotenmono ni miru," 7.

89. *KKNK*, 10: 607.

90. Nakamura Utaemon and Yamakawa Shizuo, *Utaemon no rokujūnen*, 84.

91. Mutō Miyao, "Genzai geinō," 2. Perhaps even more than kabuki dramas, critics derided *shinpa* melodramas that celebrated the vacuous lives of characters from

the consumer class (*shōhi kaikyū*) and leisure class (*yūkan kaikyū*) (see Kimura Shin'ichirō, "Tatakai no ko," 22). Government propaganda pointed out that most of these upper-middle-class characters were a drain on Japan's wartime economy.

92. *Tōkyō shinbun,* December 11, 1943.

93. *KKNK*, supplement volume, 117.

94. *Tōkyō shinbun,* December 11, 1943.

95. Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze*, 262–263.

96. Kawatake Shigetoshi, "Kessenka no kabuki ni tsuite," 3–6.

97. Excerpted from *KKNK*, supplement volume, 107.

98. Kusuyama is referring to scripts of *The Country Samurai* and *Execution Ground at Suzugamori* in which final scenes were rewritten (to reward good and punish evil) to gain approval by the censors.

99. The so-called "Dan-Kiku" period of kabuki, in the late Meiji period, was dominated by the great actors Ichikawa Danjūrō IX and Onoe Kikugorō V, both of whom died in 1903.

100. Kusuyama Masao, "Yakkai na kabuki," 1.

101. *NGESS*, 2: 273–275; Kodama, "Senchū sengo," 55–59.

Chapter 9: Kabuki Is a Luxury

1. *SS*, 161.

2. *NT,* February 26, 1944.

3. Kodama, "Senchū sengo," 60; Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 18: 109. It seems that in Kyoto theaters were asked to close voluntarily for a single day, February 26 (*KKNK*, supplement volume, 125).

4. *Asahi shinbun,* February 22, 1944.

5. *Mainichi shinbun,* February 22, 1944. The argument, carried out in the press, was dubbed the "Bamboo Spear Incident" (Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 18: 96).

6. See Dower, *Japan in War and Peace*, 101–123, and Bix, *Hirohito*, 354, 510–518, 526–530, for example.

7. *NT,* March 21, 1944.

8. The American slogan "Remember Pearl Harbor" was intended to rouse citizens to determined action. The bureau's deliberate mistranslation, "never forget" (*wasureru na*), changes the phrase to suggest retaliation or revenge.

9. *Yomiuri shinbun,* February 23, 1944. Propaganda in both Japan and the United States painted the enemy as subhuman beasts: Roosevelt was a devil sporting horns and tail, and Tōjō was an inhuman apelike rapist (see the propaganda poster display at the National WWII Museum, New Orleans).

10. *Asahi shinbun,* February 22, 1944.

11. Sasaki Naokata, quoted in Haruko Taya Cook and Theodore E. Cook, *Japan at War,* 468.

12. After January 1, 1945, the 200 percent tax was applied to all tickets costing more than one yen, or most kabuki tickets (*KKNO* 9: 354).

13. For example, see Kabuki-za, program, April 1932, 52.

14. Kodama, "Senchū sengo," 58–60; *NGESS*, 3: 266.

15. *NGESS*, 3: 264–265.

16. Nakamura Kichiemon, *Kichiemon nikki*, 294. Actually Truk did not "fall" to the Americans. Air and naval attacks in February 1944 rendered the base useless. American forces moved past it to invade and capture Saipan and Iwo Jima, closer to the home islands.

17. *Tōkyō shinbun,* February 20, 1944.

18. *Mainichi shinbun* (Osaka), February 15, 1944.

19. *Yomiuri shinbun,* February 26, 1944. Among other things, the decree's fifteen articles reduced national holidays, banned manufacture or sale of nonessential goods, and prohibited forming new businesses and companies. It authorized drafting high school students, women, and middle-school children into labor battalions and sending them to work in mines and munitions factories ("Engeki kessen hijō sochi ni tsuite," 2).

20. *Asahi shinbun,* February 26, 1944.

21. *NT,* March 1, 1944; "Gekikai kessen hijō sochi nisshi," 14–15; *Yomiuri shinbun,* February 29, 1944. Also closed were the Yūraku-za, Tōkyō Takarazuka-za, and Nihon Gekijō in Tokyo; the Kitano Gekijō, Kado-za, Ōsaka Gekijō, and Umeda Eiga Gekijō movie theater in Osaka; the Shōchiku Gekijō in Kobe; and the Takarazuka-za in Hyōgo Prefecture.

22. *KKNK*, supplement volume, 126.

23. *KKNO*, 9: 316.

24. Authorities established an emergency fund to help stage hands, lighting technicians, curtain pullers, ticket sellers, ushers, and shoe checkers as well as actors, dancers, musicians, playwrights, and directors until they could move on to other work (*KKNK*, supplement volume, 140).

25. "Gekikai kessen," 16.

26. Kawarazaki Kunitarō, *Onnagata geidan*, 66.

27. Nakamura Kichiemon, *Kichiemon nikki*, 295. Kichiemon's editor, Namino Chiyo, confirms that everyone in kabuki, "actors and producers, in truth fell into utter confusion over the ban on elite theater, and Kichiemon details that chaos in later diary entries" (295).

28. *Asahi shinbun,* March 1, 1944.

29. The Kado-za, the Ōsaka Kabuki-za, the Minami-za, and the Misono-za (*KKNK*, supplement volume, 129; *SHES*, 378).

30. *KHS*, 323.

31. *KKNO*, 9: 320–338.

32. *NGESS*, 3: 267–268.

33. Kawarazaki Kunitarō, "Onnagata no ketsui," 20.

34. *NGESS*, 3: 268.

35. *Tōkyō shinbun,* March 1, 1944.

36. *Asahi shinbun,* March 19, 1944.

37. Fujita Hiroshi, *Meiji-za*, 261.

38. "Engeki kessen dainiji hijō sochi hōkoku," 3–4.

39. "Nihon idō engeki renmei," 38; Ibaraki, *Nihon shingeki shōshi*, 106–108.

40. For the names of demolished theaters and movie houses in Tokyo, see "Engeki kessen dainiji," 7–9. Havens tells us 600,000 buildings were razed in 1944–1945 to create urban firebreaks in preparation for bombing attacks (*Valley of Darkness*, 159).

41. *NGESS*, 3: 269.

42. Makino, *Nihon eiga*, 476.

43. See Kusuyama Masao, "Kono ichinen," 4–7, for a summary of the theater decrees and regulations issued in 1944.

44. Classified as theater were kabuki, nō, *kyōgen*, puppet theater, musical theater, modern drama, historical drama, dance-drama, and sword plays. Light entertainment included Japanese and Western music, dance recitals, puppet narration, storytelling, folk dance, comic patter, children's paper plays, sword dance, magic, juggling, horseback riding, and trained animal acts. Spectacle encompassed spectator sports, Japanese wrestling, baseball, and boxing, as well as public showings of mechanical dolls and lantern slides. Art galleries, museums, calligraphy exhibitions, zoos, and botanical gardens did not fall under the regulations ("Kōgyō nado torishimari kisoku," 33).

45. "Kōgyō torishimari no zenkokuteki tōitsu," 19.

46. The Home Ministry did not keep records of theater censorship, or it destroyed them after the war.

47. According to the regulations, "in general" play scripts were to be censored in Tokyo, but there was a loophole. Local police were allowed to censor purely local productions ("Kōgyō torishimari no zenkoku ichigenka naru," 37).

48. *NGESS*, 1: 253.

49. *SS*, 163; censor's stamp on *Kokumin kaihei* script, Shōchiku Ōtani Library. Article 28 of the regulation is specifically titled "Rules for the Greater Japan Producers' Association Handling of Applications for Censorship of Theater Scripts." Its four sections and twenty-three subsections lay out in mind-numbing detail how scripts are to be submitted for censorship. One original and one copy of each script to be censored should be submitted to the association, unless more approved copies are desired, and then an additional one or two copies should be presented. A translation must accompany a foreign-language script. An application form with each script must include name and address of submitter, play title, author or adapter, troupe name, and theater where performance is planned or, if touring, the tour itinerary. Each play script must contain one cover page, one title page, two (or three) blank pages, cast of characters, and, in six hundred characters or fewer, a synopsis of the play's action. The number of words erased, inserted, or corrected must be noted. If the script is not printed, each handwritten page must be of three-hundred-character size. *Kanji* characters must be written in square style, and pencil will not be accepted. Extra copies of approved scripts will be assessed a handling fee of one yen

each and should bear the year, month, and day of permission. Except in special circumstances, the Greater Japan Producers' Association will complete censorship action within twenty days of a script's receipt ("Engeki kyakuhon ken'etsu shinsei ni tsuite," 7–8).

50. "Gekidan jiji," January 1945, 9.

51. Interview with Andō Tsuruo, Tokyo, February 14, 1961.

52. *SHH*, 242–243.

53. *SHES*, 595, 655.

54. Miyake Saburō, "Shin'ei kabuki o miru," 14.

55. "Gekidan jiji yōroku," n.p.

56. Robertson, *Takarazuka*, 127.

57. *KKNO*, 9: 321.

58. *KHS*, 323.

59. "Gekidan jiji," December 1944, 30–31.

60. "Engeki kessen hijō," 3.

61. *NT*, February 28, 1944.

62. Furukawa, *Furukawa Roppa*, 557–558.

63. Nakamura Kichiemon, *Kichiemon nikki*, 296.

64. "Engeki kessen dainiji," 9; *NGESS*, 3: 269; *SHH*, 244; Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre,* 124. The reopened Osaka theatres were the Ōsaka Gekijō and the Umeda movie theater.

65. "Engeki kessen hijō," 3.

66. Louise Young shows in detail how Japanese leftists worked for some time within the rightist military administration of Manchuria (*Japan's Total Empire*, 271–276). Leftists and rightists shared the same goal of exerting state control over media, including theater.

67. Miyake Shūtarō, "Koten abunakkashii," 6.

68. Nakamura Kichiemon, *Kichiemon nikki*, 296.

69. Kawatake Shigetoshi, "Nakute zo hito no koishi karikeru," 7.

70. Onoe Baikō, *Ume to kiku*, 75.

71. Fukuhara Rintarō, "Engeki, kyūjitsu ron," 32.

72. *Asahi shinbun,* March 6, 1944.

73. Nakamura Kichiemon, *Kichiemon nikki*, 295.

74. Takebayashi Sei, "Taishū kabuki no fukkatsu," 14.

75. Toita Yasuji, "Taishū engeki to okyaku," 35. There seems to be some nostalgia in the government's attempts to support small neighborhood theaters, as opposed to the large downtown theaters. As many as thirty kabuki theaters had operated in Tokyo in the early 1920s. Most were destroyed in the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, and few were rebuilt. Kabuki's earlier plebeian character changed as owners and producers relocated major theaters to up-scale neighborhoods. The wartime audience was exceptionally varied: the old group of plebeian, mercantile spectators; well-off bourgeoisie; newly rich war profiteers and their mistresses; unsophisticated war workers; as well as special government invitees.

76. *Engekikai*, April 1944, facing 1.

77. Takahashi Kenji, "Kankyaku no dōin," 13.

78. The Ōsaka Kabuki-za resumed regular programs, mostly of modern plays, from May 1944 until the end of the war. The Shōchiku Gekijō in Kobe also reopened (*SHES*, 160–161, 378–379, 851–852). The Minami-za was allowed to reopen in April, but management turned the theater into a movie house for the next seven months. In the last eight months of the war, the Takarazuka Moon, Flower, and Snow troupes mounted six productions in Kyoto even though young women's musical performances were forbidden elsewhere (*KKNK*, supplement volume, 196–218; *KKNK*, 9: 345).

79. Hijikata Masami, in Hijikata et al., "Zadankai" 39.

80. Onoe Shōroku, *Yakusha no ko wa yakusha*, 87.

81. Shōroku was called up for army service for a third time in 1945. In all he spent three and a half years in uniform.

82. Kodama, "Senchū sengo," 61; Onoe Baikō, *Ume to kiku*, 78–79. Everyone who has written about touring describes the plentiful food the actors enjoyed at military installations at a time when civilians were living on starvation rations.

83. Nakamura Kan'emon, *Gekidan gojūnen*, 272–275.

84. Yamaguchi Hiroichi, "Shichigatsu no Kansai gekishin," 26–27.

85. Mizutani Yaeko, "Jōshū meguri," 22.

86. *Asahi shinbun,* November 11, 1944.

87. Haneda Yoshirō, "Kōki" (May 1944), 96.

88. Nakamura Kichiemon, *Kichiemon nikki*, 319–320.

89. Although actors, dancers, singers, bar hostesses, and geisha who lost their jobs under the Emergency Decrees Guidelines could receive specified amounts of compensation ("Engeki kessen dainiji," 8), it is unclear whether Shōchiku or Tōhō received monetary compensation for the loss of their theaters.

90. Terasawa Takanobu, "Kōgyō nado torishimari kisoku," 33.

91. Iizuka Tomoichirō, "Gekidan no shintaisei zu," 2–3.

92. The bombing was said to have been in retaliation for the April 1942 "Doolittle raid on Tokyo" (*NT*, January 16, 1946). Perhaps a thousand balloon bombs reached the United States between November 1944 and April 1945. The only casualties were in Oregon, where six picnickers foolishly dragged a fallen bomb from the woods and were killed when it exploded (Hashimoto Yoshio, *Nichigeki rebyū shi*, 76). The falling bombs inspired *Tōkyō shinbun* editors to caption a map of the American mountain states: "The position of our furthest front battle line" (February 18, 1945). It is also said that two other closed theaters were converted to balloon-bomb manufacture, the Kokusai Gekijō in Asakusa (Shōchiku Kabushiki-gaisha, *Shōchiku kujūnen shi*, 139) and the Yūraku-za (Hayashi Saburō, *Kōgun*, 118).

93. Young gives a detailed critique of the failures of state-mandated "cooperativism" in developing Manchuria and China (*Japan's Total Empire*, chaps. 5 and 6). But in the case of kabuki, it was possible to restrict capitalist management during the latter years of the war by closing a dozen theaters and organizing lengthy morale tours.

94. Iizuka Tomoichirō, "Kōgyō seidō o kirikae yo," 32–33.

95. Uga Makoto, "World Must Progress or Fall," 3.

96. Tipton, *Japanese Police State*, 91, 107–108.

97. Nakamura Kichiemon, *Kichiemon nikki*, 297–298.

98. Tokugawa Musei, *Musei sensō nikki*, *yon*, 82.

99. Haneda Yoshirō, "Kōki" (May 1944), 96.

100. *NT*, July 21, 1944.

101. Nagata Hideo, "Gekidan no soshikika," 6.

102. A worker's lunch break lasted forty minutes. Of this, twenty minutes was necessary for eating and ten minutes for personal needs, leaving ten minutes to see a short play. Takeda presented scripts of two sample plays (Takeda Takehisa, "Jippunkan engeki ni tsuite," 34–38).

103. "Engeki honrai no sugata e," 5.

104. Kawatake Shigetoshi, "Engeki no kokka kanri ni tsuite," 22–26.

105. Iizuka Tomoichirō, "Kabuki hozon no michi," 4.

106. Quoted in Fujinami Takayuki, *Kindai kabuki ron no reimei*, 355.

107. Powell, "Communist *Kabuki*," 166.

108. Powell notes that Senda, still in police custody, was not allowed to put his name on the Actors' Theater founding document (*Japan's Modern Theatre*, 134).

109. Senda, *Senda Koreya*, 2: 221–222. For further examples of Senda's opposition to kabuki, see Okamoto Shirō, *The Man Who Saved Kabuki*, 103–105.

110. Iizuka, "Kabuki hozon no michi," 9.

111. "Gekidan jiji" (December 1944), 30.

112. Yoshida Matsushirō, "Dai Nihon geinōkai ni tsuite," 34; "Gekidan jiji yōroku," n.p.; *KKNO*, 9: 341.

113. Yamaguchi Saburō, "Kanshū no koe," 16.

114. Fujita Hiroshi, *Meiji-za*, 262.

115. In Tokyo the Shōchiku-za in Asakusa and the Dai Ichi Gekijō in suburban Shinjuku, the Ashibe Gekijō in Osaka, and the Yachio-za in Kobe ("Engeki kessen dainiji," 7–8). Seeing the way the wind was blowing, within months Shōchiku built or converted seven small theaters to accommodate more light entertainment (*engei*) performances in Tokyo (*SHES*, 4).

116. Quoted in *NGESS*, 3: 271.

117. *NGESS*, 3: 270.

118. Yamamoto Kyūsaburō, "Shinsetsu to kunren," 2.

119. "Engekikai jiron" (October 1944), 5.

120. *KHS*, 323.

121. Toita Yasuji, *Engeki gojūnen*, 245.

122. *KKNO*, 9: 309.

123. *KKNO*, 9: 327.

124. *KKNO*, 9: 344, 346.

125. *SHES*, 594–595, 655–656, 709–710.

126. Kawarazaki Kunitarō, "Onnagata no ketsui," 20.

127. Nakamura Tetsurō, *Kabuki no kindai*, 273.

128. Kimura Tomiko, "Nan'yō banzai," 13.

129. Onoe Kikugorō, *Gei*, 365–366.

130. Toita Yasuji, "Gunjin engo geki mitsu," 18.

131. "Jōhōkyoku ishoku Shōwa jūkyūnendo kokumin engeki kyakuhon boshū," 27.

132. The tiny number of participating troupes (four, including the Vanguard Troupe) and productions (six) accurately reflects the chaos that was engulfing Japanese society at the end of 1944. Providentially, the bureau conducted the award ceremony at the Kabuki-za on May 24, 1945, the night before an air raid gutted this splendid theater (*NGESS*, 2: 259).

133. Nakamura Umenosuke et al., *Gurafu Zenshin-za*, chronology, 18.

134. Kaneko, "Gekisakka wa kataru," 34.

135. "Engekikai jiron" (November 1944), 5.

136. Takada Tamotsu et al., "Konnichi no engeki o kataru," 49–50.

137. Sekiguchi Jirō, "Sensō geki no shōrai," 20.

138. Takahashi Kenji, "Sensō geki no rinen," 18–19.

139. Iizuka Tomoichirō, "Tōmen no dai tōa sensō geki," 22–23. Mao Zedong, in his famous 1942 "Talks at the Yenan Forum on Literature and Art," advocated a similar position: high artistic quality must be subordinated to the proper political stance.

140. Kikuta Kazuo, "Sensō geki no honshitsu," 24–25.

141. B-29 bombs falling on Fukuoka City interrupted morale performances by Onoe Kikugorō VI and his troupe then touring Kyushu (*NGESS*, 3: 274).

142. *NT,* July 19 and August 20, 1944.

143. *NT,* July 22, 1944.

144. *NT,* July 20, 1944.

145. "Engekikai jiron" (September 1944), 5; October 1944, 5; and December 1944, 5. Other frantic slogans published in 1944 are "With Renewed Indignation All the More We Pledge Reprisal," "Our Guns Are Unlimbered for the Decisive Battle," and "Answer the Heroic Loyal Souls of Our Comrades Who Died on Tinian and Ōmiya Islands."

146. Shinkokugeki, *Shinkokugeki,* 143.

147. *NT,* November 11, 1944.

148. *NT,* November 2, 1944.

149. The Japanese ideographs for divine wind, literally "god wind," can be read *shinpū* or *kamikaze.* Throughout the war Japanese favored *shinpū*, the more elegant reading, while Americans used kamikaze.

150. Kushner, *Thought War*, 111.

151. Iritani, *Group Psychology of the Japanese*, 57.

152. See *Asahi shinbun,* May 9, 1943; *NT,* January 28, February 4, and December 16, 1943.

153. High, *Imperial Screen*, 483.

154. Hatanaka Ryōha, "'Mono' no kuni Amerika no engeki," 12.

155. Nakano Yoshio, "Amerika engeki no yajūsei o miru," 6–7.

156. Yamamoto Shūji, "Amerika engeki no busshitsusei to ki kaisei," 8, 11.
157. Ōkawa Chikaji, "Shinkyō gekidan," 33.
158. Itō Michio, "Amerika no kokuminsei to geinō," 10–12.
159. *JTA*, November 5, 1942.
160. Kawabata Fumiko, ed., *Shōjo no mita Taiheiyō sensō*, 212.
161. "Engekikai jiron" (December 1944), 5.
162. "Engekikai jiron" (October 1944), 5.
163. "Engekikai jiron" (December 1944), 5.
164. Oshima Seijirō, "Kichiemon shippai," 31–32.
165. "Engekikai jiron" (December 1944), 5.

Chapter 10: The Agony Ends

1. Fujita Tokutarō, "Kabuki no dentō," 6–7.
2. Hōjō Hideji, "Tairiku no tabi kara kaette," 10–11.
3. *KKNO*, 9: 352; *KKNK*, supplement volume, 187.
4. For the first time in the Pacific War, the number of Americans killed and wounded in battle was greater than Japanese deaths.
5. Thompson, *Empires on the Pacific*, 338.
6. Irie, *Shinbun shūsei*, 19: 112.
7. *Asahi shinbun* (Osaka), April 3, 1945; *Asahi shinbun*, July 14, 1945.
8. *NT*, August 2, 1945.
9. The National Volunteer Combat Corps was a culmination of the government's constant creation, dissolution, and restructuring of organizations in response to wartime failures. The corps replaced all existing government-sponsored mobilization organizations, including the Imperial Rule Assistance Association, the Greater Japan Imperial Rule Assistance Manhood Association, the Greater Japan Patriotic Labor Association, the Farmers' Patriotic League, the Greater Japan Patriotic Women's Association, and the Greater Japan Patriotic Association of Youth. When these groups were dissolved during the summer, their bureaucrats moved to the corps. It is perhaps unnecessary to add that the corps remained little more than a name in the final months of the war (*NT*, August 3, 1945).
10. *NT*, April 10, 1945.
11. *NT*, March 23, 1945.
12. *NT*, February 10, 1945.
13. Yamamoto Shūji, *Engeki to bunka*, 371.
14. *KKNO*, 9: 354.
15. Havens, *Valley of Darkness*, 103.
16. *Yomiuri shinbun*, May 10, 1945.
17. *NT*, January 15, 1945.
18. *Asahi shinbun*, April 16, 1945.
19. *Mainichi shinbun*, July 11, 1945.
20. *Asahi shinbun*, July 16, 1945.

21. *NT,* July 19, 1945.

22. In round figures, some 35 American ships were sunk by kamikaze attacks, and more than 300 ships were damaged. American army, navy, and marine casualties in the Okinawa campaign were approximately 50,000 men.

23. *Mainichi shinbun,* July 3 and 19, 1945. By the close of the Okinawa campaign, kamikaze attacks had inflicted more casualties on American sailors than any other naval engagement in American history.

24. *NT,* May 14, 1945. Postwar Japanese governments continue to deny the clear evidence of military ordered suicides. On March 30, 2007, Japan's Ministry of Education ordered that "the army's role in the Okinawa deaths be stricken from textbooks" (*Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, May 27, 2007).

25. *NT,* July 30, 1945.

26. *Yomiuri shinbun,* July 28, 1945.

27. *Asahi shinbun,* July 29, 1945.

28. *Mainichi shinbun,* July 3 and 12, 1945; *Asahi shinbun*, July 19, 1945.

29. Using various subterfuges, nearly half of the 60,000 "places of luxurious entertainment" targeted in 1944 evaded closure. The extension of the ban in 1945 was aimed in particular at the 30,000 geisha houses, houses of assignation, bars, and cafes that were still illegally operating: "steps will be taken to induce them to convert their buildings into industrial plants [and] dormitories for factory workers, evacuees, [and] sufferers from calamities" (*NT,* February 3, 1945).

30. Takafusa Nakamura, *History of Shōwa Japan*, 245. William Craig provides a moving description of the March 9–10 fire bombing of Tokyo (*The Fall of Japan*, 17–26). By way of comparison, it required six months for German bombers to destroy or damage one million houses in London.

31. *NT,* March 16, 1945.

32. Fujino, *Misono-za*, 413–414.

33. *Nishi Nihon shinbun,* April 15, 1945; *NGESS*, 3: 175–277; *Asahi shinbun,* July 25, 1945; NT, July 12, August 2 and 12, 1945. Havens (*Valley of Darkness*, 176–186) and Guillain (*I Saw Tokyo Burning,* 173–188) give graphic descriptions of the effects of the fire bombings.

34. *NT,* August 10 and 11, 1945.

35. Nihon Engeki Kyōkai, *Engeki nenkan*, 310.

36. Before Tokyo was firebombed, Shōchiku managed to mount kabuki programs at four small and medium theaters in early 1945: at the Meiji-za, the Shinbashi Enbujō, and the Asakusa Shōchiku-za in January and at the Dai Ichi Gekijō in February (*SHES*, 474, 595, 629, 656, 677, 710; *NGESS*, 3: 279).

37. *SHH*, 247; *KKNO*, 9: 352; *KKNK*, supplement volume, 187.

38. Nakamura Shikan, *Shikan gei moyō*, n.p.

39. Kataoka Nizaemon, *Yakusha shichijūnen*, 153.

40. *KKNO*, 9: 360–362.

41. Nakamura Utaemon and Yamakawa Shizuo, *Utaemon no rokujūnen*, 85–86, 90.

42. Kurabayashi, *Shingeki nendaiki, senchū hen*, 515–516; *NT*, September 7, 1945.

43. *KKNO*, 9: 352, 361–363.

44. *KHS*, 326.

45. This was the third destruction of the Kabuki-za in twenty-five years. The theater burned down in an electrical fire in 1921 and was destroyed in 1923 in the Great Kanto Earthquake before being bombed in 1945.

46. *KHS*, 326; *SHH*, 247; Kodama, "Senchū sengo," 65; Nakamura Shikan, *Shikan gei moyō*, 72–73.

47. See *NGESS*, 3: 278.

48. *Asahi shinbun,* June 10, 1945.

49. This recent estimate, published in 2006, is from Yomiuri Shinbun War Responsibility Reexamination Committee, ed., *From Marco Polo Bridge to Pearl Harbor*, 237. According to Ohnuki-Tierney, in excess of three thousand pilots of Special Attack airplanes died in suicide attacks (*Kamikaze*, 167).

50. *Yomiuri shinbun,* August 4, 1945.

51. Kōzu Naoji, a returned *kaiten* pilot, is quoted in Cook and Cook, *Japan at War*, 317–318. Writing about "*kaiten*, human torpedoes," Tanaka Tomohiro gives less dramatic figures: 32 mother submarines carried 148 one-man *kaiten* on missions, and since 68 pilots returned, it is presumed 80 died at sea (*Kaiten: Ningen gyorai*, 40–41).

52. "Rikugun ga okonatta kaijō tokkō," n.p.

53. *NT*, July 25, 1945. See Ohnuki-Tierney, *Kamikaze*, for details of the various types of Special Attack vehicles. She also provides heart-breaking accounts of the young men who flew off to their deaths, often in "utter desperation" (159–170, 175).

54. *NT*, June 16, 1945.

55. *NT*, July 19, 1945.

56. *Asahi shinbun,* March 9 and May 8, 1945; *NT*, August 7, 1945; *Asahi shinbun,* April 13, 1945; *Tōkyō shinbun,* April 28 and 29, 1945.

57. From January to August 1945, thirteen modern drama, musical review, and comedy troupes advertised Tokyo productions (*Tōkyō shinbun,* April 11, 28; May 3; July 4, 1945). For film ads, see the *Asahi shinbun* or *Tōkyō shinbun,* January–July, 1945.

58. *NT*, June 26, 1945.

59. Quoted in George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses*, 112; for Nazi rituals and Christianity, see pp. 202–208.

60. *Asahi shinbun,* July 8, 1945; *NT*, July 17, 1945.

61. Miyake Tsutsumu, "Senryoku tsuchikau hōetsukyō," 2. One other small nō stage, at Kagurazaka in Tokyo, survived the bombing as well.

62. The emperor recorded his surrender statement on August 14 (Japan time), and it was broadcast to the nation the following day, August 15.

63. Many costumes, wigs, and stage properties were taken into the countryside. As the spokesman said, they were not available for performance. But they were saved from being destroyed by American bombs.

64. *Yomiuri shinbun,* July 30, 1945. Also see, *NT,* August 7, 1945. In the postwar years, the bombed-out Asakusa Sixth Ward entertainment district never recovered its prewar importance.

65. *Asahi shinbun,* July 25 and 31, 1945.

66. Hayashi Saburō, *Kōgun*, 165–167, 182.

67. *KKNO*, 9: 358.

68. I have based the account that follows on Kikuta, *Shibai tsukuri*, 237–246.

69. Kikuta continued his diary into the postwar period (ibid., 244–250). One week after the emperor surrendered, Kikuta finished the requested script and mailed it "to Mr. S, praying for the good health of the bureau." A month after the American Occupation began, Kikuta received his usual payment from the bureau. The bureau continued to operate for another two months, until it was dissolved on order of the Occupation authorities. Within weeks of the war's end, Kikuta met with officials of the Civil Information and Education Section (CI&E) of the American Occupation forces and, doing a quick *tenkō*, agreed to write "democratic" radio plays for the Occupation. In another case of bad timing, two months after Japan's defeat, the Greater Japan Producers' Association announced the results of its Second Popular Theater Play Contest. The association did not award a first prize, but it gave a second prize of ¥500 to three plays, including a nationalistic war drama, *In Concert with the Imperial Nation* ("Tōzai nanboku," 30–31).

70. Ichikawa Ennosuke, *En'ō*, 396–397.

71. Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 122.

72. "Tōzai Nanboku," 31.

73. Kubota et al., *Engeki nenkan*, 89.

74. *KKNO*, 9: 360.

75. *Asahi shinbun,* July 3, 1945.

76. Kataoka Nizaemon, *Yakusha shichijūnen*, 154–155.

77. Ichikawa Ennosuke, *En'ō*, 398.

78. *Asahi shinbun,* August 13, 1945.

79. *Asahi shinbun,* August 1, 1945.

80. *KKNO*, 9: 352–364.

81. *KKNK*, supplement volume, 187–220. Shōchiku's Minami-za was the only major theater in Kyoto. Small theaters in the city included the Kagetsu Gekijō, Kyōto-za, Shintomi-za, Mitomo Gekijō, Nishijin Gekijō, Shōchiku-za, Kyōhō Gekijō, and Kyōto Takarazuka Gekijō. Most no longer exist.

82. *KKNO*, 9: 352, 363–364.

83. *KKNK*, supplement volume, 216; Ikenami Shōtarō, *Matagorō no shunjū*, 136; *SHES*, 67.

84. Quoted in Kitagawa Masaji, *Kaigo Tōkyō gekijō*, 240. *Shank's Mare* is a rambling, comic picaresque. Set in a dozen locales, it is normally played by a cast of thirty-five or forty actors.

85. Haneda Yoshirō, "Sensaisha imon kōen," 41.

86. Ichikawa Ennosuke, *En'ō,* 398.

87. Haneda, "Sensaisha," 41.

88. Quoted in Kodama, "Senchū sengo," 67.

89. *NT,* April 15, 1943.

90. *NGESS*, 3: 283-284.

91. *Asahi shinbun,* August 10, 1945.

92. *Asahi shinbun,* August 13, 1945.

93. *Asahi shinbun,* August 16, 1945.

94. It is usually said that all entertainments ceased for one week after surrender, but this is doubtful. It is unclear if government officials issued an order or if theater managers stopped performances on their own initiative. In Tokyo, a newspaper ad published August 18 plugged new Shōchiku and Tōhō films that began showing August 16, the day after surrender (*Asahi shinbun,* August 18, 1945). In Kyoto, a newspaper reporter described seeing audiences packed into small theaters and cinemas on August 17. See *KKNK* for a discussion of this issue (supplement volume, 216–217).

95. Okamoto Shirō, *Kabuki o sukutta otoko,* 92.

96. Levi, *Music in the Third Reich*, 170–175.

97. Even under a strong dictatorship, it is difficult to acheive total control of art creation and production. The number of artists is too large, production is dispersed, artists' support (or even acquiescence) cannot be assured, and government agencies are certain to fight over turf control. In the case of "agencies set up to administer" the arts in Nazi Germany, Michael H. Kater goes so far as to argue for their "relative impotence." It was characteristic of the Nazi Party to create a fragmented administration "with double and triple levels of jurisdiction, duplication of responsibility, and crossed chains of command" that almost guaranteed internal conflicts over policy (*Twisted Muse,* 14, 21). To an extent this was also true in wartime Japan.

Chapter 11: War Plays in Kabuki — a Retrospection

1. Keene, *Landscapes and Portraits*, 318.

2. American theater officers in the Occupation did not know kabuki's history. For basic information about kabuki they relied on Japanese scholars. See, for example, accounts of many discussions between American theater censor Faubion Bowers and theater historian Kawatake Shigetoshi in 1946 and 1947 (Kawatake Toshio, "Senryōka no kabuki appaku to kaijo no ikisatsu," 251–253; Okamoto Shirō, *The Man Who Saved Kabuki*, 96–102).

3. *Mainichi shinbun,* August 21, 1945; reprinted, *Nippon Times*, August 28, 1945.

4. "Akō gishi geki shashin zenshū," n.p. Ohnuki-Tierney, citing Henry Smith, argues that early audiences saw an "anti-establishment theme" in *The Treasury of Loyal Retainers* based on the one-sided and unprecedented actions taken by shogunal officials in some scenes (*Kamikaze*, 145–148).

5. Powell, *Japan's Modern Theatre*, 91.

6. Powell, *Kabuki in Modern Japan*, 147.

7. *NGESS*, 3: 430–431.

8. This is High's characterization of bombastic historical narratives (*kōdanbon*) of the same era (*Imperial Screen*, 9). His phrase aptly applies to new-history plays.

9. Mayama uses the chief retainer's actual name, Kuranosuke, as part of his project of writing historically accurate plays. During the Tokugawa period, playwrights had changed the name to Yūranosuke in order to fictionalize the play as required by Tokugawa era censors.

10. Powell, *Kabuki in Modern Japan,* 149–154; Keene, "Variations on a Theme," 16–17.

11. Powell, *Kabuki in Modern Japan,* 162.

12. *NGESS*, 3: 430–435; Nakamura Umenosuke et al., *Gurafu Zenshin-za*, chronology, 14–18. It is notable that the Vanguard Theater has always been strongly political and that its politics have reversed course to suit the times. Members followed radical, antifeudal ideals in the group's formative years (1930s), were fervent supporters of the military government during the war (1940–1945), converted en masse to communism after the war (1949), and now produce plays with conservative and religious themes (2004).

13. See Henry Smith, *The 47 Ronin, Part 1*. for an excellent discussion of the theme of imperial loyalty in Mizoguchi's film.

14. According to screenwriter Gore Vidal, Winston Churchill wrote some of the antidictator speeches given to Nelson in the film (interview with Robert Osborne, Turner Classic Movies, aired November 4, 2007).

15. The play script is printed in *Kokumin engeki*, December 1941, 2–32.

16. *KHS*, 300; *NGESS*, 2: 258.

17. *JTA*, November 6, 1941.

18. *JTA,* November 27, 1941.

19. *JTA*, November 6, 1941.

20. Hosoya Yasutarō, "'Onshu ijō,' mito mama," 48.

21. Ibid., 49.

22. *JTA*, November 6, 1941.

23. Okuda Yachio, "Kabuki-za no Kikugorō," 44–45.

24. Minagi Eizō, "'Shitsubō ijō,'" 58–60.

25. *KHH*, 536–537.

26. The conflict is seen in many areas of wartime Japanese society. Two examples are selfless theatrical touring versus commercial productions in kabuki and cooperative farming versus private business in Manchurian settlement schemes (see Young, *Japan's Total Empire*).

27. One scene in *The Navy* (1943), also an overnight pickle play, is set in Honolulu near the Pearl Harbor naval base.

28. An endnote in the script published in March says that after the Osaka run, the production was scheduled to play Shōchiku theaters in Nagoya, Kobe, and Tokyo (Gōda Toku, "Honoruru shi," 79). But Shōchiku's official production chronology does not list a Tokyo production of the play (*SHES*, 377, 850, index, 177).

29. Gōda is one of the few playwrights whose support of Japanese militarism

blackened his postwar career. Nakamura Tetsurō, writing in 2006, says Gōda "was a victim of the war" (*Kabuki no kindai*, 437).

30. Gōda, "Honoruru shi," 63, 66.

31. Ibid., 67.

32. Ibid., 68–69.

33. Ibid., 75–77.

34. Ibid., 78–79.

35. Takaya Shin, "Keihan kabuki no nigatsu," 11.

36. Kawatake Shigetoshi et al., *Engeki hyakka daijiten*, 3: 572–573. Chiarini's circus featured trained elephants and horses. On the Kabuki-za stage actors dressed in horse and elephant costumes would almost certainly have played the animals.

37. *KHH*, 69–70; James R. Brandon and Samuel L. Leiter, eds., *Kabuki Plays On Stage*, 4: 17–18.

38. Ijima Mitsuru and Umetada Misa, "Godaime Onoe Kikugorō butai ishō shashin," 250, 269.

39. *Kabuki shinpō*, July 27 and 31, 1894.

40. *KHH*, 85.

41. James R. Brandon, "*Kabuki* and Shakespeare, Balancing Yin and Yang," 34–37.

42. Kimura Tomiko, "Nan'yō banzai," 13.

43. Fujita Hiroshi, *Meiji-za*, 260.

44. *SHES*, 167–177, 272–276, 595; *KKNO*, 9: 82.

45. At the Kabuki-za, August 1928, 1929, 1930, 1932, 1940, and December 1929 (*SHES*, 183, 191, 192, 199, 215, 288–289).

46. See Miyake Shūtarō, "Shinsaku! Shinsaku!" 4.

47. *KHH*, 398.

48. Hagino, "Shinsaku no sekai," 36.

49. "Shibai goyomi, yon," 25.

50. Atsumi, "Daigo shinsaku geki," 31–35.

51. Onoe Kikugorō, *Gei*, 358–367.

52. Mosse, *Nationalization*, 195.

53. Sugamura, "Ken'etsu no kyōka," 16.

54. A handful of new-history plays were given revivals both during and after the war, among them, *Faithful Retainers of the Genroku Era* and *General Nōgi*. Few overnight pickle plays were revived during the war. *All Citizens Are Soldiers* and *Submarine No. 6* are exceptions.

55. Okamoto Kidō, "Jihengo no kabuki, 2–3.

Chapter 12: Inventing Classic Kabuki

1. Draft "Memorandum to Japanese Empire Issued by General Headquarters of Allied Forces," September 22, 1945 (National Archives, Record Group 313, Box 8563). Information in the draft was presented orally to the assembled Japanese producers.

The memorandum itself was never sent to the Japanese government.

2. Draft "Memorandum for: All Theatrical Owners (Producers) of Japan," attached to CI&E, Memorandum, "Consolidated report of this unit for 29 October 1945," October 30, 1945 (National Archives, Record Group 313, Box 5255). The draft was not approved, and the memorandum was not sent.

3. Kawatake Shigetoshi, *Nihon engeki zenshi*, 965–966.

4. To cite a Meiji period kabuki play recently translated into English by Valerie Durham, characters in Kawatake Mokuami's *The Woman Student* (1877) freely discuss and act out "modern" themes of women's equality, open education, freedom to pursue personal development, and alternatives to feudal values (in Brandon and Leiter, *Kabuki Plays On Stage*, 4: 120–198).

5. For example, *SH*, 124.

6. Ōtani, "Shintaisei to engeki," 9–10.

7. Kabuki-za, program, March 1932, 5–22; *KHS*, 211.

8. The Kabuki-za produced 696 plays between 1928 and 1942. Of these, 265 were twentieth-century works (168 premieres and 97 revivals of recent plays), and 431 were traditional kabuki plays. In 1928–1929, Kabuki-za's "conservative" producers staged 40 premieres, 11 recent revivals, and 41 traditional plays, that is, 55 percent new or recent plays. See *KHS*, 177–311.

9. *Mainichi shinbun,* August 21, 1945.

10. Brandon, "Myth and Reality," 9.

11. During the initial six months of the Occupation, kabuki managers programmed a small number of new plays set in postwar Japan, including *Sardine Clouds* by Uno Nobuo, *A Man of the Soil* by Gōda Toku, and *People in a Storm* by Kaneko Yōbun (*SHES*, 67, 68, 379), perhaps partly responding to CI&E's continued requests. Even this modest effort ended by mid-1946. No one of significance in kabuki, with the possible exception of Ichikawa Ennosuke II, thought that new plays with democratic themes were good for kabuki.

12. Daily reports of CI&E theater activities titled "Consolidated report of this unit" can be found for the period November 8 through November 21, 1945, in the National Archives (Record Group 313, Box 5255). Many scripts censored by CCD are in the Shōchiku Ōtani Library, Tokyo. For recently published descriptions of early Occupation kabuki censorship, see Mayo, "To Be or Not to Be," and Brandon, "Myth and Reality."

13. Letter, Joseph Goldstein to his parents and sister, January 22, 1946 (in James R. Brandon, "An Addendum to 'Myth and Reality,'" v–x).

14. Between December 4 and 7, 1945, Shōchiku, CI&E, and CCD officials went over the plays on Shōchiku's list and produced a revised list of 510 plays (Anonymous, "Kabuki, shin jidaigeki jōen kubun ichiranhyō," 1–10). CCD censors continued to examine the plays and on December 21 created a final list of 518 titles, 152 traditional kabuki and 366 new-history plays. Taking kabuki and new-history plays together, 198 were approved for production and 320 disapproved ("Disapproved list of kabuki & neo classical plays," December 21, 1945, signed A.L.D[ibella] [National

Archives, Record Group 313, Box 8618]). In all, the Americans added or dropped approximately two dozen titles from Shōchiku's original list. That is, American officers accepted 95 percent of Shōchiku's choices and altered about 5 percent. Because my interest here is Shōchiku's intentions and actions, I refer to Shōchiku's original list in my discussion.

15. As might be expected, Shōchiku did not include in the list overnight pickle plays about the lost war, like *Pearl Harbor, Three Heroic Human Bombs*, *The Final Hours of Commander Kanō,* or *Ten Thousand Cheers for the South Seas*. Good or bad, these plays were erased from memory, falling into the oblivion of kabuki's forgotten, and to some extent hidden, history.

16. According to Ōki Yutaka, during the four years of Occupation censorship (1945–1949), fewer than two dozen new scripts were staged at Shōchiku theaters, while more than three hundred traditional titles were staged (*Sengo shinsaku gikyoku jiten*, 12–13). Ōki's count may be low, but his basic conclusion, that few new scripts were staged, seems correct.

17. The numbers of "released" kabuki plays derive from two sources. First, published production chronologies, primarily *SHES*, provide dates and venues of Shōchiku productions of "not possible" plays from 1945 to 1949. Second, the written approval or disapproval of American censors can be seen on Japanese-language scripts in the Shōchiku Ōtani Library and Kansai Shōchiku Archive, and on English-language translations in the Stanley Y. Kaizawa Collection, University of Hawai'i Hamilton Library.

18. Among the most popular released plays were *The Soga Brothers' Encounter* (6 productions), *Love Suicides at Toribe Mountain* and *Pulling the Carriage Apart* (5 productions each), and *The Subscription List, Kumagai's Battle Camp, Revenge on Ōshū Plain*, and *Japan's Twenty-Four Paragons of Filial Piety* (4 productions each).

19. Translated from the journal *Seikei shunjū* (date unknown). Kawatake also argued that state protection and guidance were necessary for kabuki's survival. Needless to say, this recommendation ran counter to Shōchiku's commercial aims (Kawatake Shigetoshi, "Kabuki Drama Said in Danger of Falling into Rank Decay," 4).

20. "Memorandum to: AKM, RHK," signed EE, September 26, 1946 (National Archives, Record Group 313, Box 8618). Earle Ernst, head of Theater Subsection, was writing to his superiors Arthur K. Mori, head of Pictorial Section, and Richard H. Kunzman, head of Press, Pictorial, and Broadcasting Division, CCD.

21. Bowers, "Japan: 1940–1990," 7.

22. Calls to preserve traditional kabuki (*dentō kabuki o hozon*) against undue change began almost from the beginning of the Meiji period (1868–1912). However, it was radical to suggest that new plays should not be done.

23. Critic Watanabe Tamotsu departs from this conventional wisdom. In his view, kabuki was in danger three times after the war. Two such occasions were November 1945, when the Occupation authorities closed *The Village School,* and 1949, the year Kikugorō VI, Kōshirō VII, and Sōjūrō VII died. But, he writes, the most dangerous time was 1961–1965, when Kōshirō VIII left Shōchiku to form a new kabuki troupe

under Tōhō direction, thereby destabilizing kabuki management. This occurred just as newly affluent audiences were deserting kabuki for more modern pleasures. Watanabe notes the number of kabuki productions dropped precipitously, from 46 in 1959 to 36 productions the next year. He speculates that kabuki did not provide the speed and vitality craved by young audiences (*Utaemon densetsu*, 23–24).

24. Nagayama et al., *Grand Kabuki,* xxiv.

25. Onoe Baikō, F. Bowers, and Araki Chikashi, "Sengo kabuki no kyūseishu to kataru," 135; Ikenami, *Matagorō no shunjū*, 132–134, 138.

26. Miyake Shūtarō, *Engeki techō*, 69.

27. According to Nagata Kayano, the average number of kabuki plays staged each year in the decades following the end of American censorship is 251 (1950s), 132 (1960s), 131 (1970s), and 96 (1980s), showing a steady decline. Competition from TV, travel, sports, computer games, and other entertainments of a prosperous society drew audiences away from kabuki (Nagata, ed., "Kabuki hakusho kara no hōkoku," 32).

28. *SHES,* 466–467, 590–591, 673–674, 695–696, 706; *KKNO*, 9: 62–118; *KKNK*, 10: 445–546.

29. Interview with Orita Kōji, Tokyo, December 17, 2003.

30. Nagata Kayano, "Kabuki hakusho," 22.

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James R. Brandon was stationed in Japan while serving in the U.S. Army in 1951 during the Korean War and later as a Foreign Service officer in the American Embassy, Tokyo (1957–1961). He has been writing about kabuki theater and translating and directing kabuki plays since 1953. His publications include *Kabuki: Five Classic Plays*; *Chūshiingura*: *Studies in Kabuki and the Puppet Theater*; *Nō and Kyōgen in the Modern World*; *Cambridge Guide to Asian Theatre*; and, with Samuel L. Leiter, *Kabuki Plays On Stage* (4 vols.) and *Masterpieces of Kabuki: Eighteen Plays on Stage.* He is founding editor of *Asian Theatre Journal.* Among the honors bestowed on him during his long and illustrious career are the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette, of the Japanese government; the Uchimura Prize of the International Theater Institute, UNESCO; and the John D. Rockefeller 3d Award. He is emeritus professor of Asian theater at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa and has been visiting professor at Harvard University, New York University, and Justus Liebig Universität, Germany.